

25. Now take a look at the loose needles. If they look too thick to be stitched almost flat at the starting point, remove the gauge and carefully spread apart the loose needles. Then use scissors to snip out one or two needles from the center (and only from the center) of the bundle, as shown in the photo at the top of the next page. Take another stitch or two, sight again, and snip out another needle or two as necessary. Continue stitching and thinning out the needles so that your final stitches cover only a single, flat layer of needles.

26. Take the very last stitch just past the starting point, but don't cut off the thread. You'll now backstitch over the rim in a clockwise direction (see the middle and bottom photos on page 23) to form a series of decorative, X-shaped reinforcing stitches. Take two or three backstitches by inserting the sewing needles into the same holes created when you plain-stitched around this last coil. Bend the remaining loose needles up and back against the first backstitch you took (see Figure 14). Cut the needle ends away at the crease you've just made; then continue backstitching the rest of the rim.

27. To finish off and hide the thread, run your sewing needle into and along a short length of the uppermost coil before snipping off the thread end. Use the point of your sewing needle to tuck the tip of the thread down into the coil.

Drying and Applying Shellac

Before you allow the pine needles to dry or apply any shellac, you may need to hand-mold a damp project into the desired shape and, if necessary, prop it up with heavy objects such as bricks or soup cans. You may even want to use rubber bands or string to help the project retain its shape as it dries. Once a project has been coated with shellac, its shape will be permanent!

Applying Shellac (Optional)

28. Examine the basket closely before it dries. If you see any threads, knots, or whitish pine needle ends, use a pointed object to push them back into the coil. Then allow your basket to dry overnight.

29. Cover your work surface with waxed paper or several layers of newspaper. Place the basket on the paper and, using a small paintbrush, apply a coat of shellac. (The shellac-covered project won't stick to the paper.)

30. When the Shellac is completely dry, briskly rub the inside and outside of the basket with a lint-free cloth. This will remove any loose pine needle ends protruding from the coils.

Using Spray Finishes Safely

Make sure you have adequate ventilation when you apply spray acrylic or shellac, and avoid getting any on your skin or clothing.

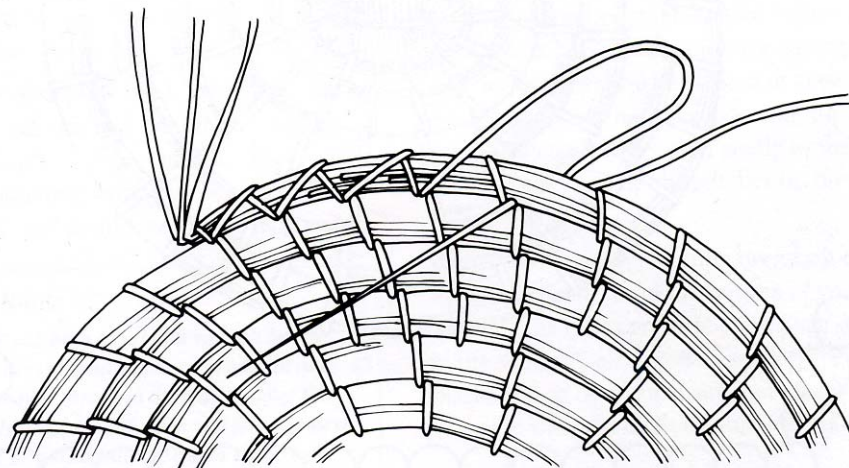


Figure 14