

Fri Jan 2, 2004 6:44 pm

Pic of the Day - Challenge Project - Braided Rugs

For those of you whom are new, every now and again we have an "I Dare You/Challenge Project" with some kind of project that is homesteading/farming/self-sufficient in topic. This time around it is how to make a braided rug for your floors, or on a smaller scale for your kitchen chairs. I have a small braided rug on one of my 100 year old + kitchen chairs and it is rather comfy though the green paint on the chair MUST go one of these days.

The "Pic of the Day" can be located at
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/organichomesteadinggardening/>

Previous "Challenge Projects" (formerly called "I Dare You Projects") are located at
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/organichomesteadinggardening/files/>
under the File "Challenges Dares and Projects"

I am basing these instructions from a 1932 Braided rug instruction which was originally from a Womans Magzine in that year.

I have photos of various braiding and such in our PHOTO album which is located at
<http://photos.groups.yahoo.com/group/organichomesteadinggardening/1st>
and will be under the Folder " Braided Rugs"

The sphere of the braided rug has enlarged since great grandmother's time. No longer must it remain solely underfoot in order to "keep its place". Smaller rugs are intended for chair-seats, and are as comfortable and good-looking as can be. A step or two higher in the scale and we see them serving in delightful fashion as hot dish mats

for the table; there seems, indeed no limit to the uses that may be found for this simple old-time handicraft.

Materials vary--a great deal depending, of course, on the purpose for which the completed piece is intended. For table-mats--which may be of any desired size, round or oval--white or unbleached cotton will serve, with a touch of color, if liked, given by having one strand of a shade which matches the predominating tint of the china, perhaps; or there may be a bit of colorful embroidery in simplest stitch. Again, two colors of chambray or other goods of similar texture may be used, or white for the center of the mat with a braid in color for the border. Ample opportunity is sure to be found for the exercise of one's creative genius, in any case; and no matter how material, coloring and uses may differ, the methods of making are practically the same.

The rags are cut or torn in strips an inch and a half in width--wider for thin goods--both edges are evenly turned under and then the strip is folded lengthwise in the middle. By this means no raw edges are in evidence. Some workers like to iron the strips, thinking the folds stay in place better; others, especially when using heavier worsted material, advocate cutting the strips narrower and simply turning the edges under, omitting the middle fold. In this way their right side of the braid--and the mat-- is kept free from any appearance of frayed or raw edges and the finished piece, lined, has an equally smooth wrong side, but of course can only be used "right side up with care", while if the strips are prepared as directed the rug or mat is reversible. By a little experimenting one can readily determine the method best suited to her requirements and material.

The three-strand braid is commonly used, being easiest to handle and sew, and better in case of small articles, for which indeed, the wider braids-- of four, five, six and seven strands are not easy to

manage. Using any color or colors desired, one, two, or three, join one end of each of the three strips and attach to any convenient object heavy enough to hold while the strands are evenly woven. Pick up the first or right-hand strand, carry it over the second or middle strand, then pick up the third or left-hand strand, bring it to the right over the first, which is now the middle strand, then take the strand at the right again, and continue; that is all there is to it; a simple weaving back and forth. Do not draw the strands too tightly; just keep a firm, even tension. When it is necessary to joint two strips simply fold the end of one over that of the other, half an inch or so, and sew both sides carefully.

Having braided a sufficient length for the center of the mat, "begin at the beginning" of the braid, fold it to form a tiny circle, sewing securely, then carry the braid around and around, drawing it in on the inner or fulling it on the outer side, and sewing edge to edge with strong thread, well-waxed. Add rows of other colors, as liked. Completed the mat should lie flat and smooth. There are different ways of doing the sewing; the old-time method of joining the edges was by means of small over-and-over stitches or ball-stitch--taking first into one edge, then the other. Another method thought by at least one good rug maker to be the best ever, uses twine or carpet warp and a bodkin or blunt needle of sufficient size to take the thread; pass through every other loop on both edges, not catching into the braid itself. To make the joining extra strong go over it a second time, taking into the loops missed before. This method makes the work the same on both sides, and is really easier than the usual sewing.

With standard braids, the outermost strands are brought to the center of the braid. The common 3-strand braid is a standard braid. Theoretically there is no limit to the number of strands that can be used with a standard braid, except how many strands can be held in each hand. Up to twelve strand standard braids were made to make

rugs. The virtue of these braids is that a nice thick braid can be made of fairly light weight fabric strips. Many of the older braided rugs made with cotton strips have multiple strands in a standard braid, and unless you look closely at the rug you will think that the 3 strand braid was used because all standard braids have more or less the same shape and appearance.

With flat braids, the more strands used, the wider the braid becomes. Flat braids of 4 to 12 strands were used for rugs made with cottons or wools. The flat braids (except for the 4-strand) all work the outermost strands over and under various combinations of one or two other strands. This allows various striped, chevron or diamond patterns to appear in the braid itself.

I used old blue jeans several years ago and though rough and rather rustic, it made a great mudroom rug.

If you are gonna give it a try, please tell us, if you make one .. PLEASE take pictures and post them for us to see, keep us informed of your progress and the ups and downs.

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