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The Wirral Ship Fellowship – Wirral Vikings

cordage

Making cordage out of brambles and nettles

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This guide will show you how to make cordage out of brambles and nettles.

With both of these methods there can be an element of pain if done wrong so please use gloves when handling

Use clippers to obtain lengths of Nettle or bramble. Cut as close to the bottom of the stem as possible

nettles

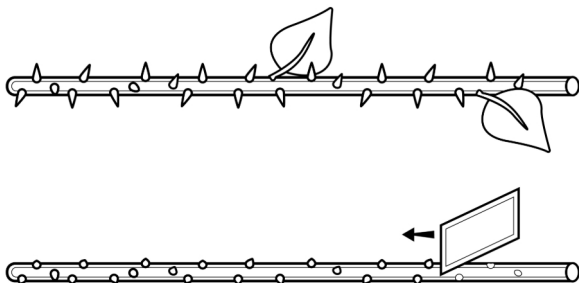
Nettles – Use a gloved hand to draw the nettle through your closed fingers to remove the stinging hairs and leaves. Once you have gone one way you can then go the other.

Continue till the hairs are removed.

brambles

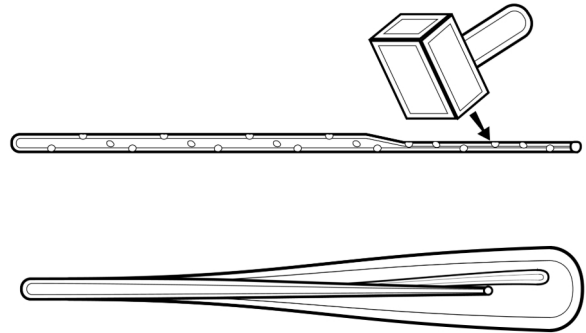
Bramble - Use a gloved hand to draw the bramble through your closed fingers to remove the stinging thorns and leaves. This make take slightly more pressure than the nettles so use thick gardening gloves. Once you have gone one way you can then go the other.

Once the main thorns are removed use a blunt scraper to remove at more of the thorn stems from the stem. Be careful you do not dig too deeply into the stem as the fibres you need are just under the surface.



pulping

For both types of material you now have to pulp the centre of the stem. There are various ways to do this.



Some people like to put the Nettles on a stone floor and walk on them .

Others like to gently tap the stem with a wooden hammer or round stone.

For brambles I use a wooden mallet on a stone.

Make sure the whole length is pulped. You can also flex the stem gently to make sure all of the length of stem is pulped.

fibre removal

The fibres can now be removed from the nettle in strips. The same goes for the bramble.

Normally the centre pith is removed and not used but for the bramble it can be kept and used as a very rough cordage for not essential binding of objects.

Both fibres should be hung on a nail to dry.

processing

Both sets of fibres will still contain slightly woody sections. You can place the fibres between your hand and gentle rub them together.

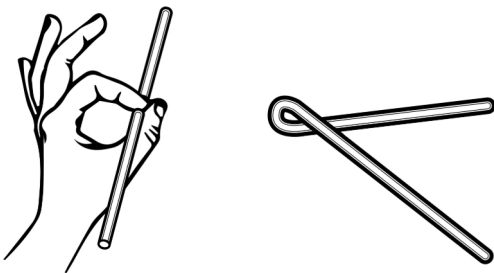
The wood elements will begin to crumble and fall off. The more you do this the more the larger fibres will start to break down into thinner and thinner fibres.

The thinnest being one strand in thickness can be used in sewing.

I usually take the final fibres and grade them into different thicknesses depending upon the width.

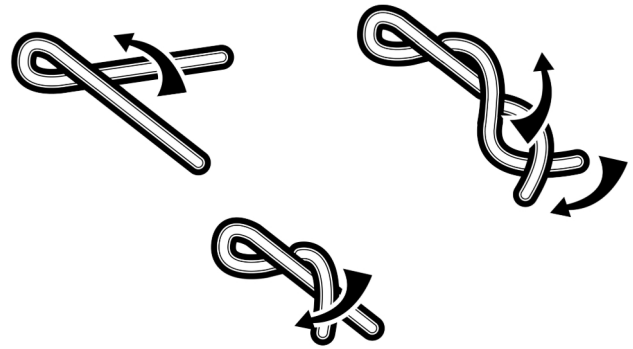
weaving

Take a strand of the fibres and offset its length so you have two strands with the loop in the middle. Make sure one side is slightly longer than the other. This allows for a stronger joint when you will add more fibres later.



I tend to find it is better to slightly moisten the strands which weaving to stop breakage.

Squeezing your middle section gently twist one fibre until it kinks and forms a loop on itself. You will now have a loop. And two strands. Take the loop in one hand (I am right handed so I hold the loop in my left hand).



Take the fibre furthest away from you and twist it away from you with your thumb and finger. You are then going to change the positions of the two fibres by take this fibre and the one behind it and twisting your wrist back and up toward yourself so the twisted fiber goes up and over the other fibre.

The untwisted one goes underneath the twisted one and to the front position.

Move your left hand down so you pinch the new twist to stop it unravelling.

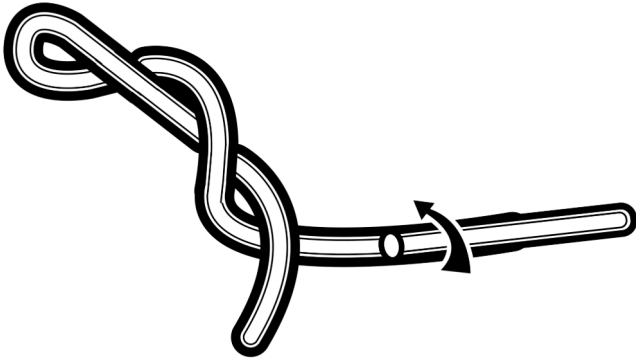
Now take the new clean fibre and repeat the process. Grab the fibre between thumb and for finger. Twist it forward and then take both fibres and swop their positions again.

The newly twisted one coming up and over the one you twisted first and that one going underneath the other.

Move you left hand down to pinch the new twist and begin the process again.

adding fibres

New fibres can be added To the twists when needed. I like to add when I have four cm left on a strand.



I fold a new fibre near the end and hold them against the existing fibres. Then as I make the next twist I twist the new fibre onto the old one.

This can make a slightly thicker section but usually your fibre is thinning out at this point so two thinning ends can be added together to make the normal width required.

You then carry on like this till you get the length you want.

To end the cordage I tend to wet and add a small knot just to hold it in place. These become microscopic and do not interfere with sewing if used in that way.