Made from a tough paper, fiber rush is a good imitation of traditional natural rush. It is a continuous twisted strand that eliminates the hand twisting and splicing required when working with cattail or sea grass.

To weave one square seat, you will need the following tools and materials:

- A 2 lb coil of fiber rush
- Scissors, framing square and pencil
- Flat-head screwdriver, hammer/mallet and upholstery tacks
- Corrugated cardboard
- Spring clamp (provides a third hand as needed)
- Spray bottle filled with water (when lightly dampened, fiber rush becomes more pliable)

While you can work with the continuous strand, working with a 25′ length of fiber rush will make it easier to handle. Use a square knot to join the ends of the fiber rush midway under the seat, where it will be hidden from view.

Corrugated cardboard makes an ideal material for stuffing the seat. Cut it in trapezoid shapes so that it fits neatly between the woven layers. Three to four layers will be needed. Cut the pieces for each successive layer a little smaller than the previous layer.

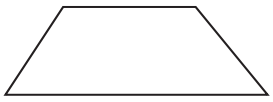

Figure 1: A trapezoid.

Using Fiber Rush

The following instructions were excerpted from *Projects for Woodwork Training* (Algrove Publishing – Classic Reprint Series), which was originally published in 1917. While the text itself may be old-fashioned, the techniques for using fiber rush haven't changed.

Wrapping a Square Seat

Beginning with the upper right-hand corner, lay one end of the twisted cord on top of the rail, allowing the end to extend, as shown at A (see **Figure 2**); allow the cord to pass over the edge and under the rail, as shown at A, then over the top and edge of the rail marked B. This binds the starting end.† Pull the cord right under the rail at B and carry it directly across to the upper left corner of the frame and over the top at C, around the edge and under the rail at C, then over the top of the rail at D, over the edge and under the rail at D, directly across to the lower left corner, over the top of the rail at E, around and under the rail at E, and then over and under the rail at F, across to the lower right corner, over the rail at G, around the edge and under G, over the rail at H, around the edge and under the rail at H, back to the upper right-hand corner. The same course is repeated each time around.†† Care should be exercised to have the cord fit closely where it passes over the rails. Do not allow the strands to overlap at the corners as the work progresses. Sometimes it becomes necessary to force the strand together by using a block of wood and a mallet.

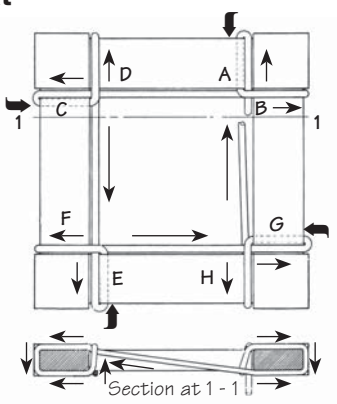

Figure 2: Method of wrapping.

† *For a more secure set-up, you can tack the end in place.*

†† *When the space is filled, tack the fiber rush to the underside of the chair rail, leaving a strand about 4" long from the tack. Tuck the end of the strand into the seat.*

The fiber cord being of paper prevents it from being soaked in water for any length of time. By dipping it into the water ††† and allowing it to remain but a moment, enough water is absorbed to make the handling of the cord somewhat easier and in drying out it tightens about the frame, making smoother work.

††† *Misting water from a spray bottle is adequate for dampening the fiber rush.*

Stuffing the Seat

As the work progresses, it becomes necessary to stuff the space between the layers of cord. This stuffing must be well done in order to prevent breaking at the inner edges of the rails. When the wrapping and stuffing are completed and the frame placed, the cord should be given a couple of coats of shellac. Sometimes varnish is used. Care should be taken when shellacking that all the strands are forced into place. The shellac or varnish will aid in keeping a perfectly smooth surface, and is a protection against moisture. If so desired, a coat of stain may be applied before using the shellac. This is especially desirable when the seat is to be of the same color or a tint of the same color as the frame of the chair.

Wrapping a Rectangular Stool

In wrapping a rectangular stool, proceed the same as when wrapping the square.

Figure 3 shows a partially wrapped rectangular stool top. It shows the short rails already filled while there is considerable vacant space to be filled on the long rails. The weaving around the corners is no longer possible. The problem is to fill the vacant space on the long rails. This is accomplished by going over and under a long rail, across half of the frame opening, as shown in **Figure 3**, up through the center opening, across the remaining half, and over and under the other long rail. This is continued until the seat is finished.

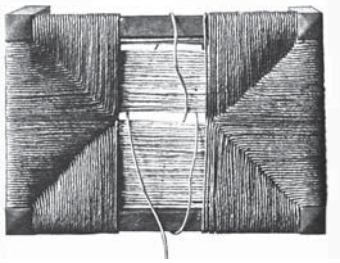

Figure 3: Partially wrapped rectangular top.

Rush Seating an Irregular Seat

The drawing in **Figure 4** clearly shows that the front rail is longer than the back and that the side rails are equal in length.

The first step in the seating of this shape is to mark off a distance on the front rail equal in length to the back rail. This is done by placing one arm of the framing square along the long edge and the other arm butting against the inner edge of the cap on the short rail, and drawing the lines on the longer rail, as shown in **Figure 4**.

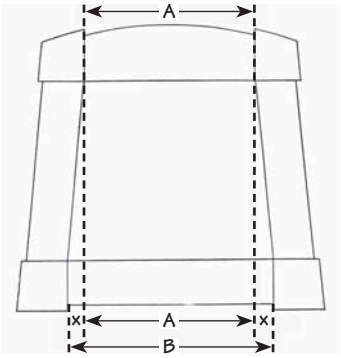

Figure 4: Method of marking an irregular frame. X = 1/2 Difference between A and B.

This is a sort of squaring-up process, marking off or describing a perfect rectangle in the center. If the framing square is not at hand, the squaring-up may be done by subtracting the length of the short or back edge between the caps, from the length of the long or front edge between the caps, and one-half of this difference marked off on the long rail, measuring from the inner edges of the corner caps, as shown in **Figure 4**.

In the wrapping, the first step is to fill in the space at the side not a part of the rectangle. One way to fill in the extra space at the front corners is to tack one end of a strand to the inner edge of one side rail close to the corner. Wrap the cord around the corners, as shown in **Figure 5**, and tack the other end to the inner edge of the opposite rail. Proceed in this way until the spaces on the front rail are filled. There is now a rectangular space, which is wrapped as already described.

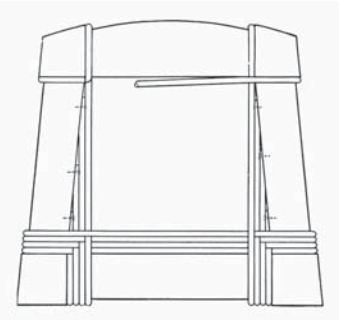

Figure 5: Method of wrapping an irregular frame.

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