

Strand Cane

Used as a durable yet supple seating material for hundreds of years, rattan cane is the outer bark of the rattan palm, a climbing vine that grows to the top of tropical forest canopies. The rattan strand cane can be incorporated into new furniture and is ideal for restoring a family heirloom or flea-market find.

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

- 270' coil of strand cane, plus 8' of 4 mm binding cane to cover the holes and create a finished border for the weave
- Pencil, dividers and a framing square
- Caning pegs
- Scratch awl
- Utility knife
- Needlenose pliers
- Sponge (or cloth) and a bucket of water
- Caning needle (optional)

Cane Size/Width	Hole Diameter	Hole Spacing (center to center)
2.0 mm (fine-fine)	3/16"	1/2"
2.5 mm (fine)	7/32"	5/8"
3.0 mm (medium)	1/4"	3/4"

Steps in Caning

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 strand cane haven't changed.

Drilling Perimeter Holes (in a New Chair)

Note: The dimensions noted for the hole spacing and hole diameter are for weaving with 2.0 mm (fine-fine) strand cane. For 2.5 mm (fine) and 3.0 mm (medium), consult the chart above. When recaning a chair, keep in mind that the cane passes through each hole several times. Be sure to measure the spacing at different locations on the frame. If it is uneven, use the average distance between centers over approximately 6". If the chair has more holes on one side than on the other, you may have to skip a hole in order to keep the rows parallel and the pattern straight. The spare hole will be covered up with the final binding.

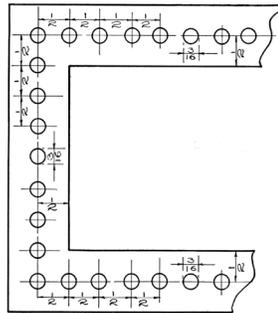


Figure 1: Method of locating holes.

Figure 1 shows one corner of the opening to be caned. Draw a pencil line around the entire opening, 1/2" from the edges. It will be observed that this distance from the edge is allowed in most all commercial work for various widths of cane. With a pair of dividers, mark off 1/2" spaces on the line just drawn by beginning at the upper right-hand corner where the lines intersect, and proceed to the left. In marking the opposite rail, use the try-square or framing square, as this will bring the holes, when bored with a 3/16" wood bit, directly opposite each other. **Figure 1** shows all necessary details. When the boring is completed, the frames are ready for the cane.

First Step: **Figure 2** shows the first step in cane weaving. Moisten a hank of cane in either warm or cold water. It is not necessary to allow it to soak more than two or three minutes*, as the water remaining on the cane is absorbed, making it very pliable. Start a strand right side up** by drawing one end through the hole marked 1, as shown in **Figure 2**.

Hold this end in place by forcing a peg into the hole. Draw the other end of the strand through the opposite hole marked 2, always keeping the right side up. This is most easily done by drawing the strand between the thumb and forefinger. This not only keeps the right side up, but prevents twisting and kinks. Another peg may now be inserted in hole 2. See that the cane is fairly tight. The end is next brought up through hole 3, care being taken that the right side of the cane is always kept to the outside. To do this, the cane must be drawn between the thumb and forefinger each time. The end is now carried across the opening and down hole 4. The peg is now removed from hole 2 and placed in No. 4. The end is next brought up hole 5, and the peg taken from hole 4 and placed in No. 5. Continue in this way until all the holes in the parallel rails have been used, as shown in **Figure 2**.

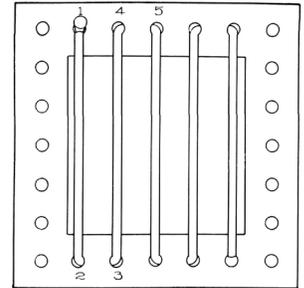


Figure 2: First step in caning.

*Soaking the cane for 15 minutes will make the cane more pliable.

**Shiny/glossy side up.

Second Step: There is no difference between the first and second steps, except that the holes in the other parallel rails are used, and the cane is carried over the first. If there is any part of the first strand left, do not cut it, but carry the end over to the first hole in the vertical rail, and proceed as in the first step. **Figure 3** shows the second step completed. Move the pegs as the strand travels from one hole to the other.

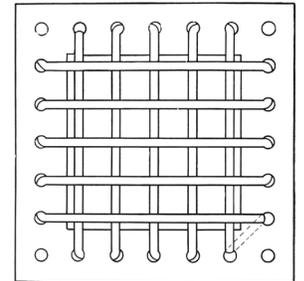


Figure 3: Second step in caning.

To fasten the end, draw it under the nearest stitch on the underside of the frame, as shown in **Figure 4**. The new end may be fastened in the same way as the end of the used one.

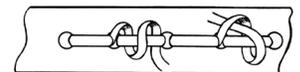


Figure 4: Method of tying cane ends.

Third Step: This step is identical with the first. It runs over the first and second, and is parallel with the first. It will be observed by this time that the same hole is used a number of times. It often becomes necessary to use the scratch awl in forcing an opening to allow the cane to pass through the hole.

Figure 5 shows the third step completed.

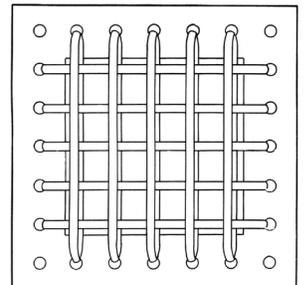


Figure 5: Third step in caning.

Fourth Step: The weaving, properly so called, begins at this particular stage of the work. It is in this step that the needle is used. It will be observed that some holes have been used twice, and some once. Start a hole next to a corner that has been used but once, and on the side toward the open space to be caned. With the needle, begin to weave over and under, across the entire opening, as shown in **Figure 6**. ***

***To make it easier to weave the cane, shift the top vertical cane slightly to the right.

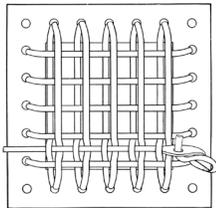


Figure 6: Fourth step in caning.

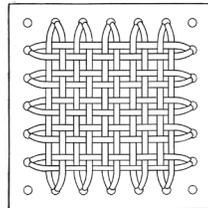


Figure 7: Fourth step after being woven.

The end of the cane is now run through the eye of the needle and drawn through, being careful to avoid kinks and twists. Draw the end through the hole, bringing it up through the next hole. The needle is now woven across from the opposite direction and the cane is drawn through. This is continued until the entire surface is completed, as shown in **Figure 7**.

Moisten the cane with a sponge or cloth, and push the parts to form pairs. It will be observed that the cane forms itself into groups. The strands from right to left form groups, and those from front to back form groups. **Figure 8** shows the fourth step completed.

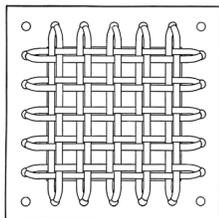


Figure 8: Fourth step completed.

The fourth step may be accomplished without the needle by bringing the end of the cane over and under, following the same course as described for the needle.****

****When weaving without a needle, place one hand on the top of the frame and the other underneath it.

For convenience, the work should always be clamped to some substantial support – the workbench or a table.

Fifth Step: This step begins with the first diagonal weaving. For convenience, start a strand at the upper right-hand corner. With one hand under, and the other over the frame, guide the end so it passes under the first vertical group and then over the first horizontal group, as shown in **Figure 9**.

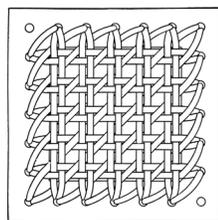


Figure 9: Fifth step in caning.

Since the end passes under the first vertical group, it must pass under each group parallel to the first; and since it passes over the first horizontal group, it must pass over each horizontal group parallel to the first. When putting in the diagonal lines of cane, two parallel lines begin or end in the same hole at the corners. **Figure 10** shows the wrong way to begin.

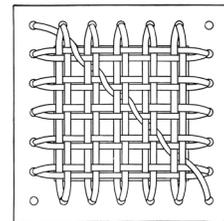


Figure 10: Wrong way to start fifth step in caning.

Sixth Step: In this step, it will be observed that the cane is carried from the back left corner to the front right corner, over the first vertical group and under the first horizontal group, thus making these diagonals perpendicular to the first. It is now seen that where the first diagonals passed under the vertical group in the fifth step, the second diagonals pass over the vertical group, as in **Figure 11**. Great care should be taken to have the cane so drawn in, that the right side is always to the outside. This is done only by drawing the strand between the thumb and the forefinger.

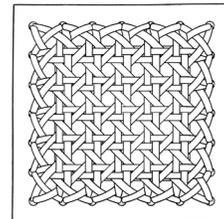


Figure 11: Sixth step, caning complete.

The Binder

The binding cane is broader than that used in the weaving. Its use is to cover up the rows of holes through which the weaver has been drawn.

The binding is a simple process, and is done in the following way: Pull a cane, similar to that used in the weaving, up through a hole. Lay the cane, to be used as a binder, over the hole, and pull the cane over it, allowing it to pass down through the same hole. This makes a loop over the binder, holding it secure.***** This is continued around the entire chair. The binder is shown along the left edge of **Figure 12**.

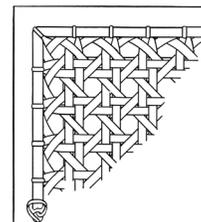


Figure 12: Method of weaving binder.

***** It is not necessary to weave a loop in every hole; every other hole will do. Be sure to moisten the cane.

The Trim

When the underside of a piece of caned work is exposed, it often detracts from the general appearance of the finished article. In such a case, narrow strips of wood may be grooved, as shown in **Figure 13**, and tacked over the unsightly parts, thus giving it a neatly finished appearance, as in **Figure 14**.

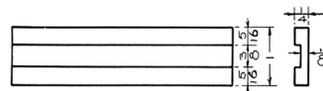


Figure 13: Sketch of trim.

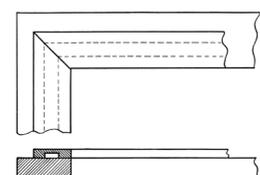


Figure 14: Trim applied to underside of caned panel.