

Design Resource

Screw Pine Craft - Kanyakumari, Tamilnadu

Eco-friendly Ancient Craft

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Hariharasudan T.

NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/screw-pine-craft-kanyakumari-tamilnadu>



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Introduction

Screw pine is a plant, which falls under the Pandanus genus. It is monocot and not a pine. Screw Pine is a generic name for several varieties of trees that are closely related, but none of which is a pine tree at all. It is derived from the word Pandan and is derived from an Indonesian name of a tree called Pandan, commonly known as screw pine and falls under pandanaceae family. They look like palm trees, with long thick, dark green leathery leaves, shaped like swords. Some screw pines are cultivated for their fruit, which are edible, some for flowers and fragrant leaves. Screw pine tree can be anywhere between 3 to 65 feet tall. Screw pines grow near the seashore and water bodies. It requires plenty of water and it can withstand drought and salty conditions. It can grow fast if it receives plenty of water. Most of them grow horizontally than vertically. Screw pine has exceptional capacity for the protection of the banks of rivers and canals from erosion. Its fibrous root system helps to hold the alluvial soil intact and maintain the water-holding capacity of the soil. Screw pine provides great refuge for a number of organisms, especially fish. Screw pine is ecologically considered a keystone species, which is a must for the ecological balance of this area.

Screw pine mat weaving is an ancient craft, which is more than 800 years old, now a days craft have been diversified from mere mat weaving to plenty of daily utility items. Artisans are given training in developing new designs. Besides bed mats, the artisans are now making products like vanity bags, carry bags, wastepaper basket, laundry boxes, newspaper holder, files, interior decoration items etc.

Government is also providing training to artisans and helping them in promoting this craft. They are encouraged to attend various exhibitions around the country. The artisans get training in planting of screw pine, collection of the leaves once in three months without harming the plant, management of raw material, dyeing using both eco-free and permitted dyes as well as organic dyes, stitching and splicing of the leaves, fumigating, packing etc. which makes them professionally competent to meet international demands.

Kanyakumari is one such place where the screw pine craft can be found and many industries related to them can be seen. Kanyakumari also known as Cape Comorin is a district in the state of Tamil Nadu. It is the southernmost tip of Peninsular India. It is the meeting point of three oceans the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. It is also the southern tip of Western Ghats range. Kanyakumari is a popular tourist destination and has been a town since Sangam period. Kanyakumari is been mentioned in the ancient Greek book, the Periplus of Erythraean Sea, which has the sailing directions from Red sea to Indus and Malabar. Ptolemy's geography describes commercial relations between western India and Alexandria. Kanyakumari was a center for great trade and commerce. Various kings like The Cholas, The Cheras, The Pandyas and The Nayaks ruled it. Kanyakumari is one of the popular tourist attractions in the south. Kanyakumari gets its name from the Devi Kanya Kumari, considered to be the sister of Krishna. The goddess is believed to be one who removes the rigidity of our mind. The temple here is a Sakthi Peetha.

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The place was also known as kanyashram of the Baalaamika, the deity of the temple. This is one of the temples in India where Devi is worshipped as a child. The rites and rituals are done in Kerala Namboothiri method. The temple is very old and mentioned in ancient Sanskrit literature.

M/s Thangajyothi a State awardee from kanyakumari district is doing crafts out of screw pine leaves for the last four decades. Now let us see how it is been done.



An image showing major artisans involved in making different kinds of screw pine crafts.

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C. Thanga Jothi: The senior artisan who is well-versed in screw pine crafts.



A workplace of artisan where almost everything is done by extraction of fiber to the final product.



Artisan involving in weaving mat.

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Finished product.

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Tools and Raw Materials

The following are the tools and raw materials used for screw pine craft:

- **Screw Pine Grass:** Raw Material used in making the craft.
- **Scissors:** Its used to cut the grass mat.
- **Pencil:** Its used to make marks on the mat.
- **Measuring Tape:** Its used in measuring the dimensions.
- **Sewing Machine:** Its used to stitch the mat to required shape.
- **Cardboard Sheet:** Its used as a supporting board during making of the craft.
- **Lining Cloth:** Its used to cover the inner walls of the pouch or bag.
- **Needle:** Its used in stitching the mat.
- **Threads:** Its used for sewing the pieces together.
- **Knife:** Its used to strip and scrap the grass to make it straight.



Dead screw pine leaves.

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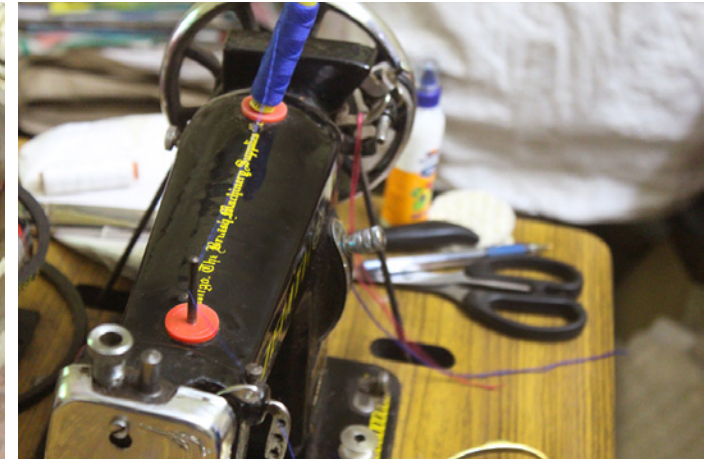
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Pine strips are dyed in different colors.



A sewing machine is used to stitch fabric and other materials together with thread.



Zippers are used for binding the edges of an open material.

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Making Process

The grass is brought and thorns are removed and boiled in water.

The boiled grass is dried in sunlight.

The dried grass is taken and split into two-piece.

The Split grass will be somewhat coiled and rolled; it needs to be straightened out.

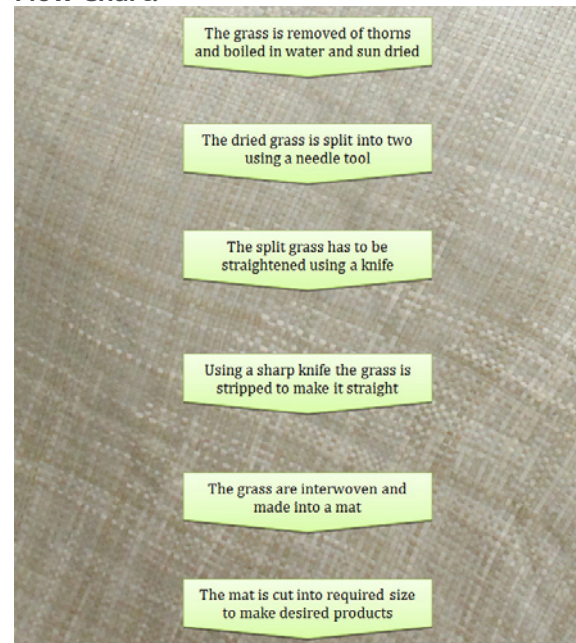
Using a sharp knife the grass is stripped neatly so that it becomes flat.

Required quantity of grass is made into strips to weave the grass.

The grass strips are interwoven together to produce large size mat.

According to the size required the mat is cut into small pieces to make the desired products.

Flow Chart:



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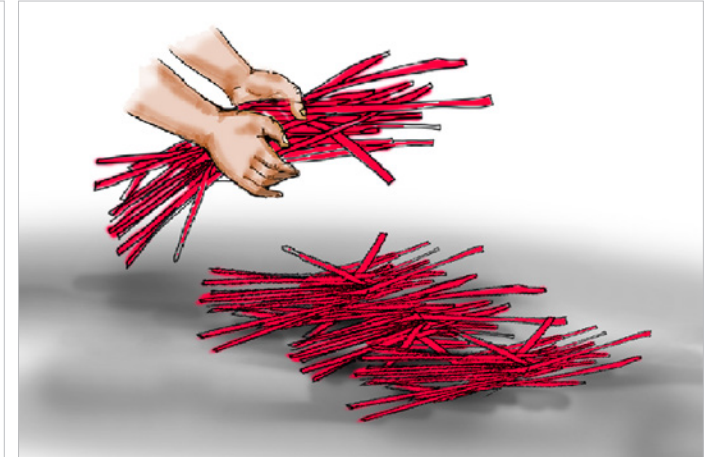
Leaves of the screw pine tree is cut with the help of a sickle tool.



The strips are cut according to the required sizes.



The dried leaves are chemically dyed in process where the color and leaves are added to the boiling water.



Dyed leaves are kept in an open place for drying.

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Artisan arranging the leaves to intertwine like cording and to give it a basic form which becomes easier in usage.



Strips are arranged in order to start weaving.



The strips are weaved in crisscross pattern.



Strips are weaved together to make small size mats.

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Artisan stops at the required size of the base once it is acquired.



The base of the pouch is completed.



Reference of the readymade pouch is taken.



Cardboard is been marked and cut keeping mat as the reference.

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Cardboard is used to give strength to the mat.



Pine mat is cut as per the cardboard measurement.



Mat is cut in a spherical shape to make sides of the pouch.



Spheres are stitched with cloth and cardboard to give strength.

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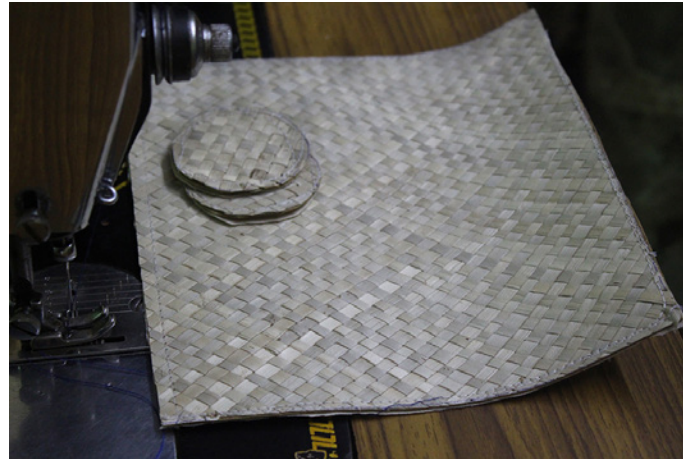
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Base of the pouch is ready.



A cloth is cut to make borders of the pouch.



A blue color cloth is stitched to give outline of the pouch.



A cloth is stitched on all four sides.

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Over view of base of the pouch.



Stitching of the coaster.



Front side of coaster and pine mat.



Zippers are stitched on either side.

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Zippering the pouch.



'X' pattern of stitching is followed as the coaster's border.



Decorative items are used to enhance the beauty of the pine pouch.



Beautifully designed screw pine pouch.

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Products

Mat, Pouches, Handbags, Coasters, Purse and jewelry. Price of the product ranges between INR 20 to INR 2500.



Beautifully designed Pine leaf mobile cover.

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Antique Screw Pine Pouch.



Traditional Purse.



Beautiful small side bag for girls.



Classical screw pine mat.

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Round shaped dinning tablemats.

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Contact Details

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You could write to the following address regarding suggestions and clarifications:

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