

Design Resource

Pine Needle Craft of Chamba

Needle Crafts

by

Sakshi Gambhir

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/pine-needle-craft-chamba>



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<https://dsource.in/resource/pine-needle-craft-chamba/introduction>

Introduction

Though pine needle basket weaving is a centuries-old craft, it is still as inexpensive, natural and unique. The women of Chamba (and neighbouring villages) are being trained to work with this abundantly available raw material and make innovative products. One of the several organizations that conduct such trainings and workshops is Due North. Though it is essentially an experiential and rural tourism venture, the trainings fall under its craft chapter.



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Place

Chamba is a small hill-town in Tehri Garhwal district of Uttarakhand, about fifty kilometers from Mussoorie. Located amidst dense pine trees and deodar forests, it offers invigorating views of the Himalayas. There are several villages around Chamba where a lot of pine related products are being made. These include Rani Chauri, Jodi Paani and Saur. In earlier times when there was no electricity in these villages, the bark of the pine trees was used to light fire. The needles are also used to insulate the ceilings of Kachhe Makaan (Mud Houses) and prevent the rain from washing them away.



Entering Chamba



The hill-town Chamba in all its glory



Pine forests



Saur village

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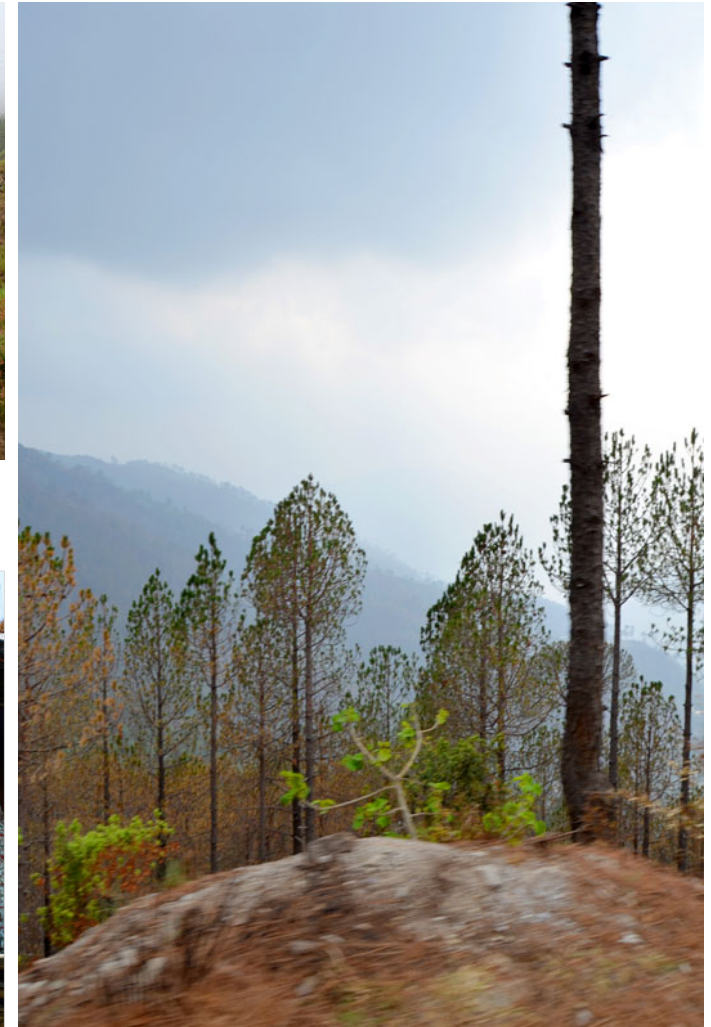
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A shop in JadiPaani village



A house in Saur village



Pine forests

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Pine forests



A closer view of a pine tree

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A closer view of the pine needles



Wired chaos on an electric pole

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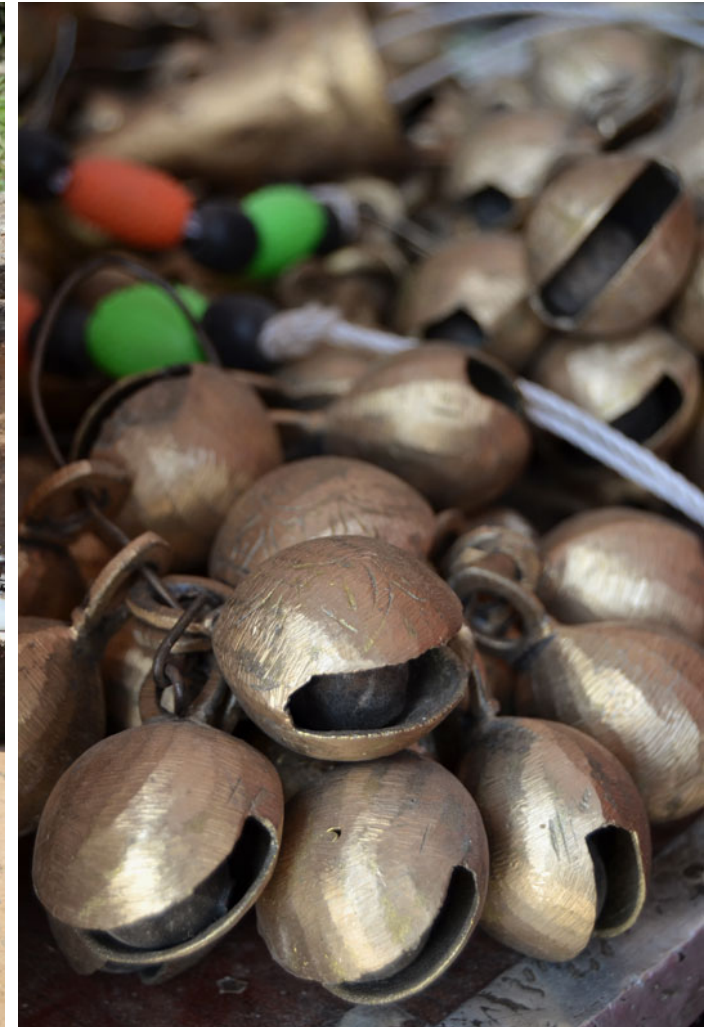
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Beautiful metal ghadas (utensils) for cooking



Ghungroos at a shop in Chamba

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Traditional silver jewelry at a shop in Chamba



Outside a shop

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Greens of a vegetable seller

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People

Being in Chamba takes you back in time. Though the town still faces issues like water and electricity crisis, the brighter side is a pollution-free, noiseless, slow and simple life. The people of Chamba are quite hard working. Most of them are involved in farming that primarily includes growing their own vegetables, locally. But now, the women are beginning to realize that they are equipped to generate an extra income for their families by working extra hours with crafts like Pine Needle weaving, Crochet, Doll-making etc. So the women are taking these crafts as alternate sources of livelihood.



Local residents of Chamba



Women tilling the land



Locals queuing up for water with their storage containers



Locals queuing up for water with their storage containers

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Sushila Ramolaji, the field mobilizer for DueNorth Crafts A local resident

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A local resident



A local resident

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A local resident



A young woman working with pine

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A man smoking hookah



A young kid wearing a pine accessory

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A young kid in the village



A young kid in the village

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Process

Any product made with pine undergoes three major steps:



Collection and Soaking



Natural Dyeing



Techniques

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Collection and Soaking

Each fall season, pine trees shed their needles. These are collected by the locals to last them the whole year. It is advisable to gather needles in undisturbed areas so that these aren't broken from having been walked on. Collection is usually done using a garden fork or completely by hand. The needles are then soaked in water overnight for them to become soft and pliable. Hot water is poured in sometimes to further soften them. This will make sure that the needles bend (instead of breaking) when they are coiled or sewn.



Pine needles being collected by hand



Pine needles being collected by hand

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Pine needles being collected by hand



Pine needles being collected by hand

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A closer view of pine needles



Pine needles being collected with a garden fork

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Collected pine



Needles soaked in water



Needles soaked in water

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Natural Dyeing

Experiments in natural dyeing are being done in the area to color the needles bright. This is done using roots and stems of locally available plants like Hingloda, Hinsar, Jinjaroo and Thermole. These are boiled in water and then the pine needles are soaked in them for some time. So far dark brown and yellow have been achieved but since it is an on-going experiment, other colors like red, green and blue are expected soon.



Plants (for dyeing) being identified



A locally grown plant that would dye the needle in yellow

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A locally grown plant that would dye the needle in yellow



A locally grown plant that would dye the needle in yellow



A locally grown plant that would dye the needle in yellow



A locally grown plant that would dye the needle in yellow

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A locally grown plant that would dye the needle in yellow



Stem of a locally grown plant being boiled



Stem of a locally grown plant being boiled



Pine needles being put in the boiler

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Pine needles being put in the boiler



Pine needles being let to sit for some time



An experiment with turmeric



Dyed pine needles

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Dyed pine needles

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Techniques

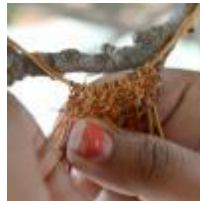
The needles have a knob (fascicle) on one end. These can be removed or left as it is, depending upon the type of product to be made. The three most commonly used techniques are weaving, coiling and braiding.



Weaving



Coiling



Braiding

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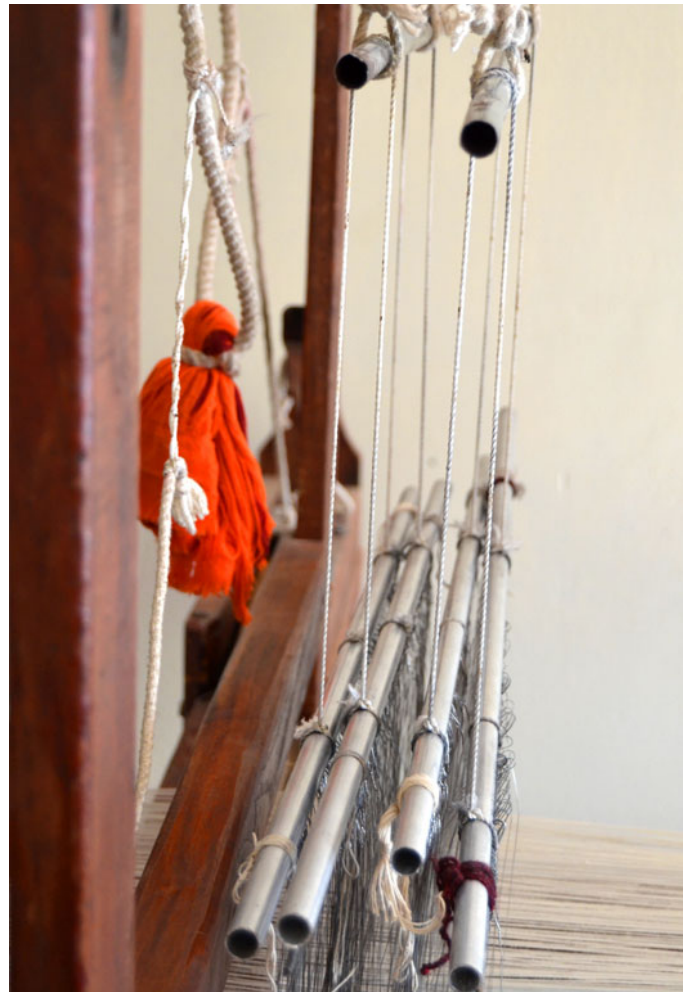
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Weaving

Pine needles (weft) are woven into cotton yarn (warp) to get very interesting products like coasters, table-mats, window-chic's etc. Cotton thread can be dyed in the color of one's choice and then woven with the needles. A combination of pine and different colors of threads can be used as well in the weft to transcend the monotony of a single color weave.



The loom



A woman artisan at the loom

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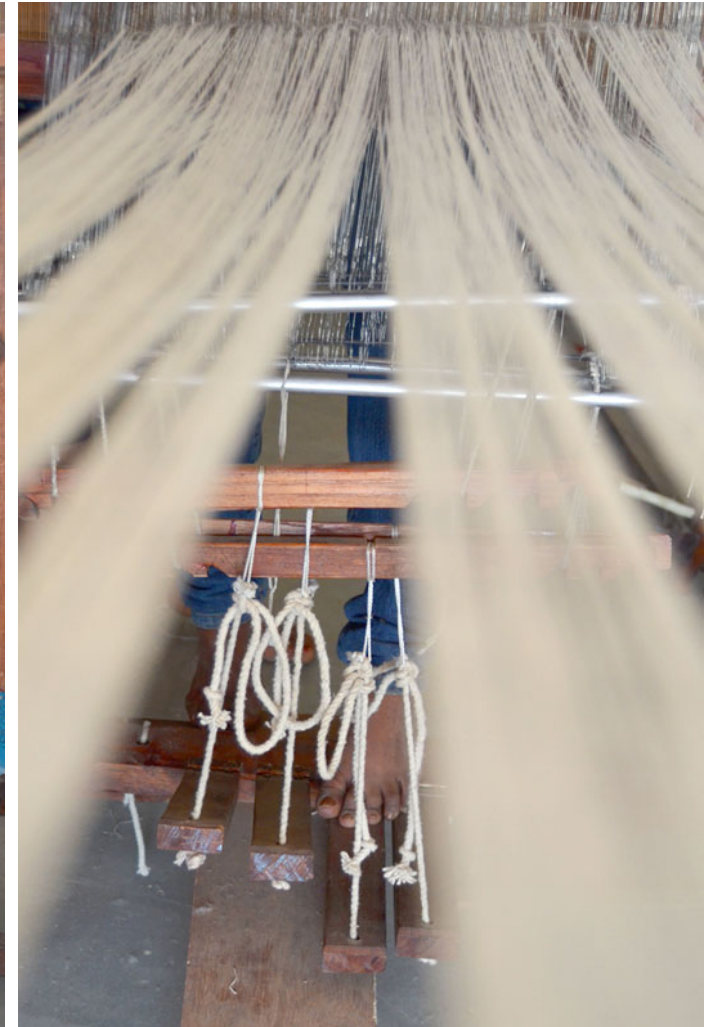
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Women artisan at the loom



The loom

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Women artisan at the loom



The warp

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The cotton yarn



The loom



The loom



Cotton being woven on the loom

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Pine needles inserted in the weft



Cotton yarn and pine needle woven together

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Coiling

Coiling is usually done to make coasters, baskets and jewelry. A single needle is carefully and continuously coiled on a bunch of pine. The number of needles in the bunch could vary depending upon how thick one wants the coiled strand to be. Baskets and coasters grow like a spiral. For these to be strong and sturdy, each concentric strand is sewn (with pine or thread) to the previous one. Sometimes glass bangles are used as the base to coil over. Beads can be easily added when making jewelry pieces by slipping them in the needle and working a small stitch to secure them in place.



The first knot of the bunch of pine



Coiling begins



Coiling begins



The first coiled round of pine needles

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A hole being made to insert the coiling-needle



A hole being made to insert the coiling-needle



The coiling-needle being inserted in the hole to secure it in place



Round of coiling continue

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Round of coiling continue



Round of coiling continue



A single needle coiling being done



Single needle coil being attached to a multiple needle coil to make a ring

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Single needle coil being attached to a multiple needle coil to make a ring



A coaster in the making



A coaster in the making



A basket in the making

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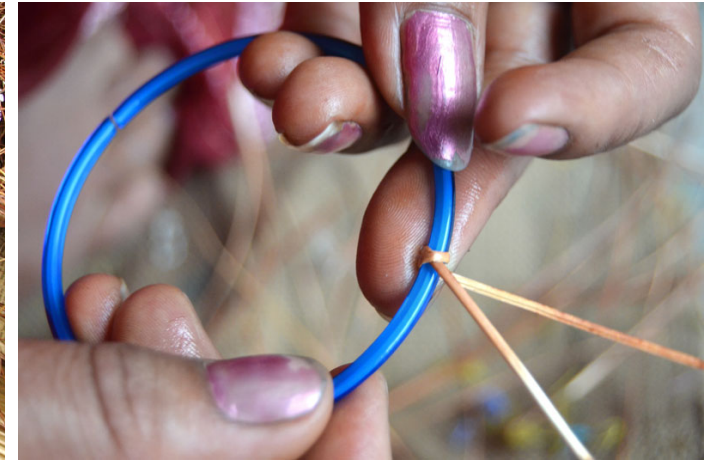
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Variety of coiled products



Single needle coiling being done on a bangle



Single needle coiling being done on a bangle



Multiple needle coiling being done on a bangle

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Multiple needle coiling being done on a bangle



Multiple needle coiling being done on a bangle

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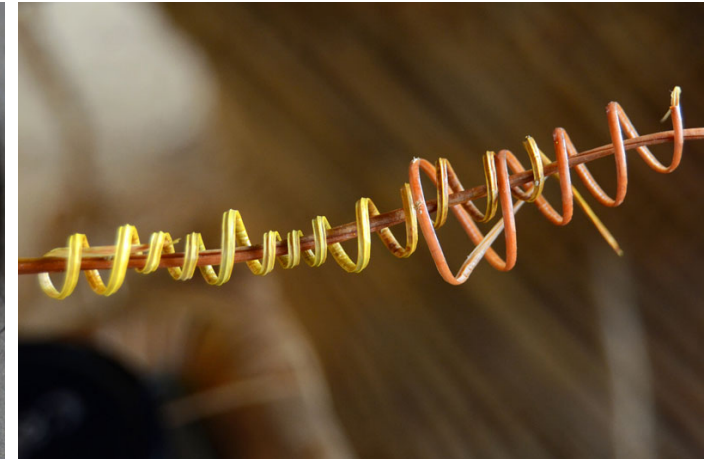
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The bangle ready to be worn



Coils of a pine needle when unsecured with a stitch

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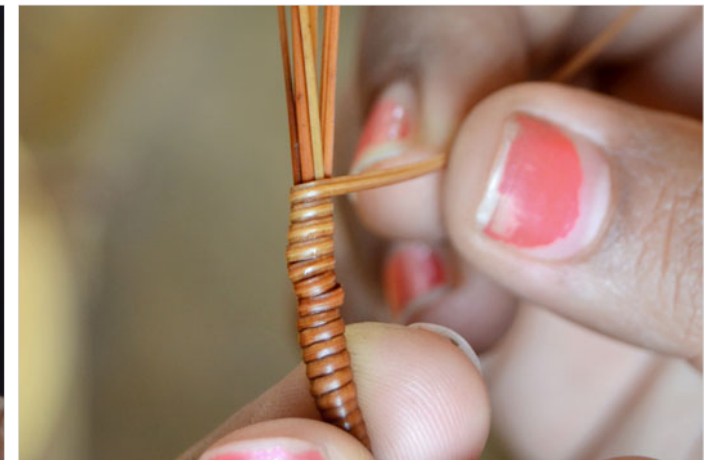
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Coiling to make a keychain



Coiling to make a keychain

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Coiling to make a keychain



The keychain

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Braiding

Braiding is another way of expanding the surface quickly, ideal for making table-mats, glass-holders, jewelry and belts.



Braiding the needles (experimental)



Braiding the needles (experimental)

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Braiding the needles (experimental)

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Products

Pine needle craft has been appreciated and accepted as a good practice to enhance the livelihoods in mountain areas by agencies at local and international levels. The women have liked the skill and are active in designing new products and designs. These currently include table-mats, coasters, candle-holders, toys, jewelry (rings, bangles, necklaces etc.) and Christmas tree charms.



Table-mat woven with cotton and pine



Table-mat woven with cotton and pine



Table-mat woven with cotton and pine

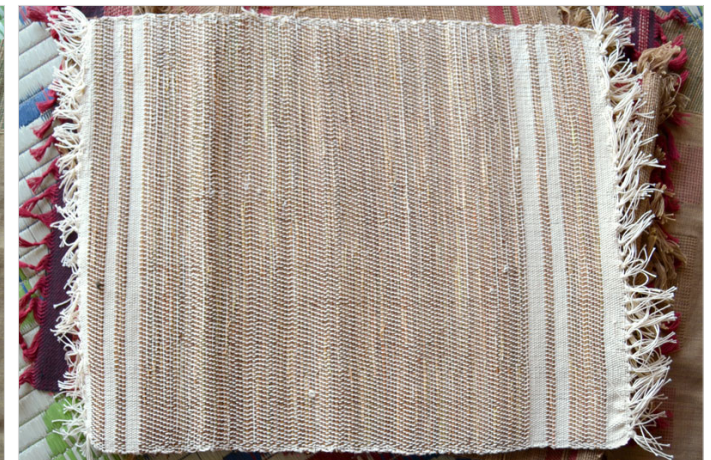


Table-mat woven with cotton and pine

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Design Resource

Pine Needle Craft of Chamba

Needle Crafts

by

Sakshi Gambhir

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/pine-needle-craft-chamba/products>

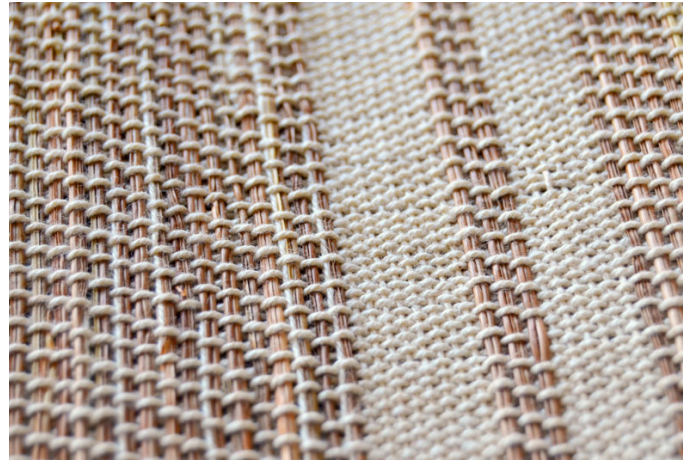


Table-mat woven with cotton and pine



Cotton strands at the end of the mat



Table-mat woven with cotton and pine

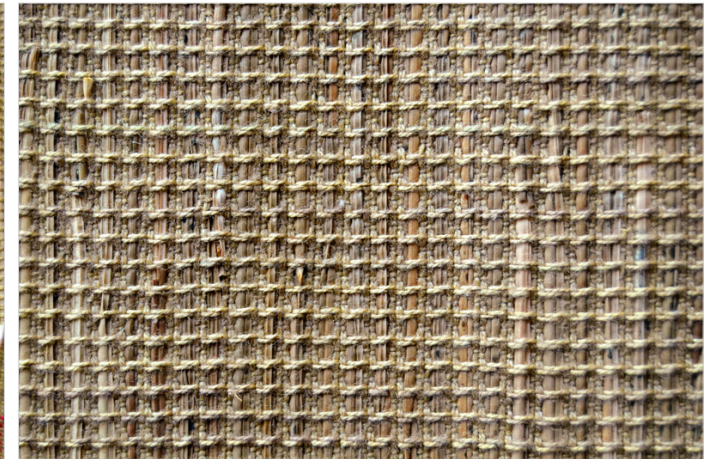


Table-mat woven with cotton and pine

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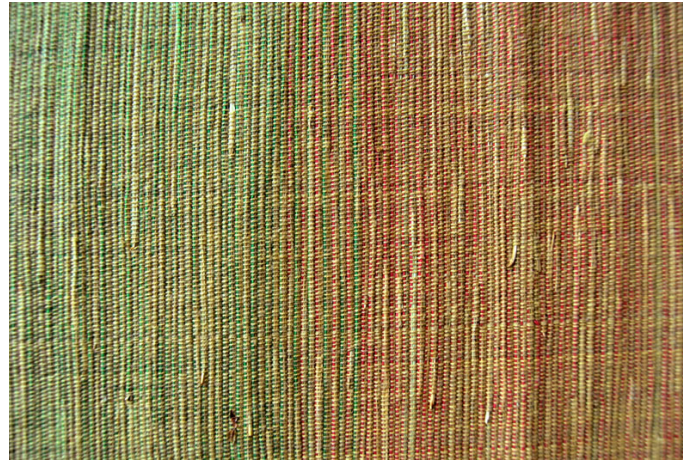


Table-mat woven with cotton and pine



Table-mat woven with cotton and pine



Table-mat woven with cotton and pine

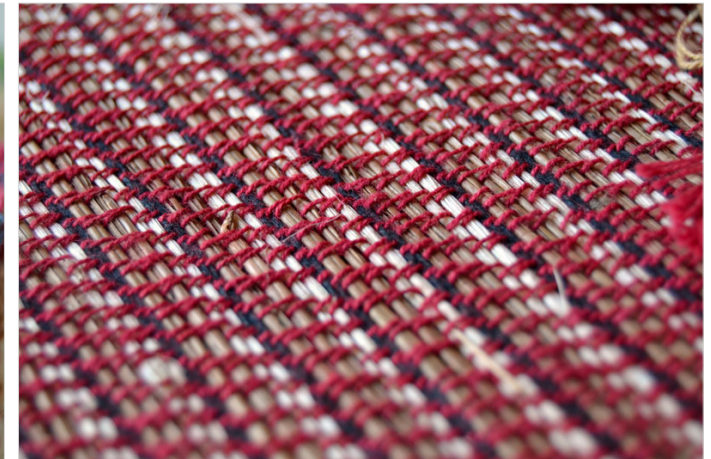


Table-mat woven with cotton and pine

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Coaster



Coaster



Coaster



Coaster

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Coaster



Coaster



Candle-holder



Boxes

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Turtle toys (pine and crochet)



Bangles



Necklace



Bead details of the necklace

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Ring



Ring



Ring



Ring

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Earring



Ring

Design Resource

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/pine-needle-craft-chamba/products>

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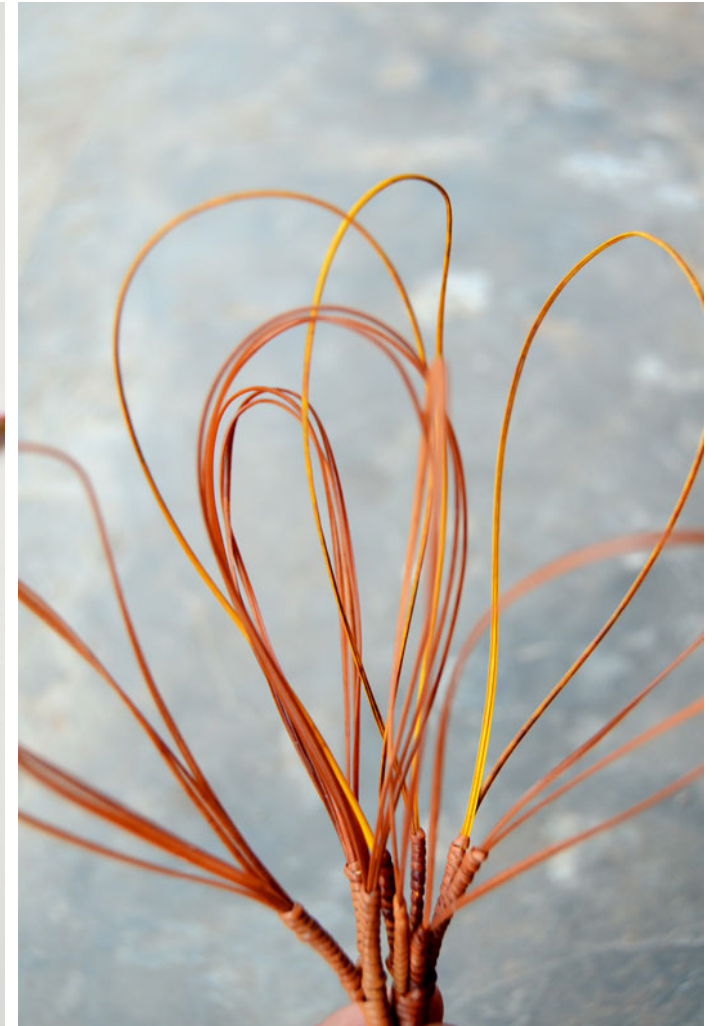
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Pendant necklace



Pine accessory

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Christmas tree charm (bell)

Design Resource

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/pine-needle-craft-chamba/contact-details>

Contact Details

This documentation was done by Sakshi Gambhir, at IDC, IIT Bombay.

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