

Design Resource

Ringal Bamboo Basketry - Uttarakhand

Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Aruna Kumari Y., Ankana Sen, Dinesh Kumar Dandapat and Shruti K. NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand>



1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

Introduction

Bamboo basketry is one of the oldest crafts practiced all over India according to availability but varies in shapes and forms. The weaving pattern differs from place to place and as per the quality of bamboo and skillfulness of the artisan. Ringal or Dwarf bamboo is very flexible in nature, available in local forests of Uttarakhand. Bamboo craft is practiced in many places of Uttarakhand due to the abundant availability of rich quality and variety of species of bamboo in the local forest. Among the species of bamboo Ringal is one of the bamboo species.

Bamboo is a tall perennial grass found in the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world. The bamboo stems which are called as culms are cylindrical, woody and jointed. Majorities of the species have hollow stems, but a few of them are solid. These are called as male bamboos. Stems may be large and hollow when grown in moist, fertile climates and small and solid in dry, sandy soils. They have the ability to stand dry as well as in cold climates. Some grow even at an altitude as high as 3000 meters.

Local bamboo artisans make varieties of household bamboo products with tender bamboo splits. These products are very strong and suitable for multipurpose uses. Containers, storage, mats, baskets, and winnows (sieve used when the crop is harvested to clear impurities in grains) are made to cater to local needs.

Tender bamboo is cut and the splits are used to weave the baskets of different shapes and sizes. The artisan meticulously creates different patterns and forms of bamboo products by changing the weaving patterns. The style of weaving also helps for durability and gives strength and stiffness to the product.

Uttarakhand has bamboo cottage industries based in Pithoragarh, Chamoli, Uttarkashi, Almora and Nainital and in other rural pockets where clusters of bamboo grow.



Natural beauty of Uttarakhand.



Hue of green products – Achieved by innovative and creative use of coloured bamboo strips.

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Source:

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Artisan splitting the tender bamboo poles.



Farmers use bamboo products for agricultural purpose.



Traditional bamboo products have made their own significance in modern market.



Artisan with his finished products.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

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<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/introduction>



Artisan weaving basket with thin bamboo splits.



Base of basket is being arranged.



Eight main strips hold the structure of the basket placed in a circular manner.



Artisan preparing bamboo sticks for winnow making.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

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<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/tools-and-raw-materials>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

Tools and Raw Materials

There are two types of Bamboo in the world with around 1500 species. Two categories are

1. Sympodial Bamboo
2. Monopodial Bamboo

Patterns of clumps can also vary in the case of sympodial bamboo where bamboo culms within a clump can be closely spaced (Bambusa Bamboo) or loosely spread out (Bambusa Valgaris).

Colder climate countries (China & Japan) host Monopodial bamboo also known as Runner bamboo as it sends long underground Rhizomes, individual shoots come out of these underground Rhizomes. There are two types of Rhizomes i.e., Pachymorph and Leptomorph.

Sympodial bamboo grows faster, produce a higher yield and can become fully rejuvenated within a few years of harvesting. Sympodial bamboo grows in clumps, out layers of the clumps contain yamper bamboo, and inner layers contain mature bamboo.

Monopodial bamboos can be easily segregated by maturity period, Harvesting is much simpler, and vice versa in the case of Sympodial bamboo. In India, Sympodial bamboo constitutes 67% of the total graving stock, and monopodial bamboo constitutes the remaining 33%.

Sympodial Bamboo Species in India	%Growing stock in Forest Land
Dendro Calamus Strictus	67%
Bambusa Bamboo	13%
Bambusa Pallida	4%
Dendro calamus Hamil Tonii	7%
Bambusa Tulda	5%
All Other Species	6%

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Meleona Barcifera, is a non-clump forming Sympodial bamboo, with a long spread out neck leading to spread out culms. Accounts for 20% of bamboo growing stock in the country.

In Uttarakhand, bamboo mats and baskets are a significant part of the craft tradition of every agrarian culture. Ringal (a dwarf bamboo) and natural fiber, medicinal & aromatic plants are among the potential resources available in different villages and adjoining forests in the state of Uttarakhand. The practice of this craft is more of a tradition as well as a means of earning a livelihood.

List of Tools and Raw Materials:

- **Ringal Bamboo:** Raw Material used to weave the basket.
- **Khurpi:** Knife to cut into strips and peel the outer layer.
- **Cutter:** Used to cut the bamboo into required sizes.



Ringal bamboo varies between three and five meters in length and is found in the hills of Uttarakhand.



A typical curve shaped knife used to peel and cut the bamboo.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

Design Resource

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Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

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<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/tools-and-raw-materials>



Tender bamboo poles are brought from forest to make bamboo products.



Whole bamboo pole is being cut by cutter.



The bamboo is cut into thin strips and the outer layer of the bamboo is peeled using a sharp knife.



The splits are dried naturally.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

Design Resource

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Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

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Making Process



Basket Making



Winnow Making

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/making-process>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
 - 3a. Basket Making
 - 3b. Winnow Making
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

Design Resource

Ringal Bamboo Basketry - Uttarakhand

Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/making-process/basket-making>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
 - 3a. Basket Making
 - 3b. Winnow Making
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

Basket Making

Ringal is a small bamboo found in the hills of Uttarakhand. Ringal varies in length according to the altitude at which it grows.

The farmers fetch the Ringal bamboo from the forest from October to November and weave the baskets in the winter when there is not much work in the fields. The whole bamboo is split into small strips as per the product to be made. The excess fibre of bamboo splits is removed before weaving the basket. The artisan makes sure to split the bamboo in different widths for warp and weft.

The thick wide strips are first placed to make the base. Thin strips are weaved by overlapping the base strips. Once the base is formed, the side walls are increased by adding additional bamboo strips. Once the weave is attained the required height, the rim is sandwiched with two thick bamboo splits to interlock the border. Artisan scholarly weaves the basket to obtain dark and lighter contrast on the outer surface of the product by selecting and inserting darker and lighter shades of bamboo splits.

The finished baskets are mainly used for storing grains and supplements and carrying purposes. Some baskets are ornamented with plain weaves. Ringal Bamboo products are tough and durable. They are made with attractive Lattice designs. Other utilities and decorative items include fruit and vegetable baskets, pens, stands, flower vases, vessels and tea trays.



The bamboo is cut into thin strips and fiber is peeled to get smoother surface.



Women artisans engaged in selecting good quality of bamboo poles.

Design Resource

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by

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/making-process/basket-making>



Senior artisan cutting and splitting the bamboo.



The strips of bamboo are soaked in water to retain moisture and to get flexibility while weaving.



Bamboo strips are arranged to make the base.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
 - 3a. Basket Making
 - 3b. Winnow Making
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

Design Resource

Ringal Bamboo Basketry - Uttarakhand

Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

by

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/making-process/basket-making>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
 - 3a. Basket Making
 - 3b. Winnow Making
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details



Weft strip is weaved in zigzag pattern.



For big baskets, thick bamboo strips are used for toughness.



Women are mostly involved in this craft.

Design Resource

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/making-process/basket-making>



Bamboo strips are joined one after another for the continuity of weaving.



Thick bamboo stick is used for the border and interlocked with bamboo strips.



Bamboo baskets of different sizes and shapes.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
 - 3a. Basket Making
 - 3b. Winnow Making
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

Design Resource

Ringal Bamboo Basketry - Uttarakhand

Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand
by

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/making-process/winnow-making>

Winnow Making

Ringal bamboo varies in length according to the altitude at which it grows. The bamboo is selected as per the product to be made. Wide and thin strips of bamboo are cut for winnow making. There are different styles of winnows that are obtained by changing weaving patterns.

The common household kitchen product 'Sieve' or 'winnow', is mainly used for agricultural and kitchen purposes. A lengthy bamboo pole is split into wide thin splits. Slightly tender bamboo splits are directly used for winnow weaving. In case the bamboo splits are dried, they are soaked in water before weaving to retain moisture.

Winnow weaving process is done by arranging the bamboo strips in a criss-cross manner with the help of a small bamboo stick. Once the weaving is completed, the extra edges are cut and removed. A small tender stick is tied on the edge of the winnow to give reinforcement.



Bamboo stick is shaped to form the front part of the winnow.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
 - 3a. Basket Making
 - 3b. Winnow Making
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

Design Resource

Ringal Bamboo Basketry - Uttarakhand

Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

by

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/making-process/winnow-making>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
 - 3a. Basket Making
 - 3b. Winnow Making
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details



Small bamboo stick is used as a base support to make winnow.



Arranging bamboo splits to start weaving.



Initially, the strips are kept under the front stick in criss-cross manner.

Design Resource

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Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

by

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/making-process/winnow-making>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
 - 3a. Basket Making
 - 3b. Winnow Making
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details



The splits are interwoven in a Zig-Zag manner.



Weaving pattern looks similar to a basket weave (textile weave).



The splits are reversed from the front stick and interwoven in the main body.



The strips are beaten mildly to sit firmly.

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Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

by

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/making-process/winnow-making>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
 - 3a. Basket Making
 - 3b. Winnow Making
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details



The side wall of winnow is being woven.



Artisan using both hands and legs tactfully to weave the winnow compact.

Design Resource

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Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/making-process/winnow-making>



Extra long edges are twisted and turned to interweave.



Final adjustments are made to tighten the formed weave.



Interlocking the top edge.

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
 - 3a. Basket Making
 - 3b. Winnow Making
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

Design Resource

Ringal Bamboo Basketry - Uttarakhand

Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, Aruna Kumari Y., Ankana Sen, Dinesh Kumar Dandapat and Shruti K. NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/making-process/winnow-making>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
 - 3a. Basket Making
 - 3b. Winnow Making
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details



Extra edges are removed after weaving.



Tender wooden twig is fixed at the top for reinforcement.



Artisan takes leg support to edge finish the product.



The extra part of supported stick is being cut.

Design Resource

Ringal Bamboo Basketry - Uttarakhand

Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand
by

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/products>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

Products

Uttarakhand state is a remote area in terms of lifestyle and is also rich in botanical resources like *Ringal* bamboo resource. In the district, Rudraprayag (Garhwal) Ringal bamboo is part of life of the local tribal population. Products of Ringal bamboo are particularly tough and durable.

Natural eco-friendly products are best replaceable of plastic containers. Nowadays, the usage of bamboo products is growing due to its good decomposable characteristics and also due to the craze toward modern lifestyle products that are introduced in the current market. Products like fruit and vegetable baskets, pen stands, flower vases, vessels and tea trays are beautifully weaved in attractive design patterns like plain weave, basket weave and twill weaves.

List of Traditional products:

- Tokri – Grain measures
- Doka – Large Baskets
- Dalia – Shallow Baskets
- Puthuka – Grain Baskets
- Dvak – Double-walled Baskets
- Suppa – Winnows
- Jhoola – Cradles



Winnow is used in daily life for winnowing purposes.



Thick cane poles are used to lock the borders of products for durability of products.

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/products>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details



A multipurpose bamboo mat used for flooring, fencing and roof as well.



Bamboo baskets are made in different sizes and patterns.

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/people-place-lifestyle>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details

People-Place-Lifestyle

The people of Dhamas, Ringal, Munsyari and Dharkot villages of Uttarakhand mainly belong to the farmer's community who also practice certain crafts throughout the year. Bamboo craft is one of them which is practiced seasonally and mainly in Ringal village. The people of this village have developed a tremendous understanding of the raw material (Bamboo) and make products of daily use and also to earn a living. Their products are sold in the nearby cities and villages like Kaanta, Berinag and Bageshwar.

The lifestyles of the people here are very simple. The nature of these village people is very friendly and welcoming. The houses are beautifully decorated with locally available resources. One can see the cultural doors of Uttarakhand houses are intricately carved and painted.



Stairs of house decorated with traditional Aipan art.



Local dwellings are far from each other.

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/people-place-lifestyle>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details



Daily labourer woman carrying things in a bamboo basket.



Bamboo strips are dried on the top of the stone roof house.



Senior artisans busy in their work.

Design Resource

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/people-place-lifestyle>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details



Woman in her leisure time.



Senior citizens of the village relaxing in courtyard.



The living premises of typical farmer community in Dhamas village of Uttarakhand.

Design Resource

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/people-place-lifestyle>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details



Village children dressed in sari.



Working women sharing light moment in the morning.

Design Resource

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Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

by

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/people-place-lifestyle>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details



Bamboo artisan at work.



The local artisan sitting on a mat made of sheep skin.

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Source:

<https://dsource.in/resource/ringal-bamboo-basketry-uttarakhand/people-place-lifestyle>

1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details



Natural beauty and habitation of Uttarakhand.

Design Resource

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Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

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- Craft Atlas of India-Jaya Jaitly
- Crafts Traditions of the World

Glossary of Words:

- Ringal-Dwarf bamboo
- Perennial - Self regenerating grass
- Lattice designs - Weaved in Zig-Zag manner
- Aipan - Traditional folk art made with rice flour paste over background-traditional art of Uttarakhand.

1. Introduction

2. Tools and Raw Materials

3. Making Process

4. Products

5. People-Place-Lifestyle

6. References

7. Contact Details

Design Resource

Ringal Bamboo Basketry - Uttarakhand

Bamboo crafts from Uttarakhand

by

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1. Introduction
2. Tools and Raw Materials
3. Making Process
4. Products
5. People-Place-Lifestyle
6. References
7. Contact Details