

Braided Candle Wrap by Jane Patrick



“The heart has reasons that the mind knows nothing of . . .”

—Blaise Pascal

Braiding is related to weaving in that threads weave over and under each other. However in braiding, the threads intersect obliquely instead of at right angles as in a woven structure. Braiding and weaving also differ in that in weaving warp and weft are two distinct sets of threads—the warp (vertical threads) and the weft (horizontal threads). In braiding, all the threads serve both purposes. Warp threads cross each other as wefts, and then become warps again. I've included braiding in this book because of the basic over-under interlacement it shares with weaving.

Because braiding requires little more than something to anchor the threads to and your own hands, it is easy to understand why it was developed in ancient times. We know people have been making braids as long ago as 8000 B.C. from evidence discovered in pottery remains. Similar braids have been found in cultures throughout the world made by people who most likely never contacted each other, yet found similar solutions to the same problems. Throughout their long history, braids have performed countless practical as well as ceremonial purposes making and using them of particular importance in Buddhist ceremonies.

Overview

This braided candle wrap illustrates the idea of taking something simple and making it special. A natural bee's wax candle is first wrapped with a strip of papyrus and then secured with a simple eleven-strand sennit braid, wooden beads, and an old copper ring. I used a smooth, fine linen yarn for a crisp and elegant look.



Materials and Equipment

14/2 wet-spun long line linen (2600 yd/lb [5275 m]/kg); 1" (2.5-cm) wide strip of papyrus or other decorative paper, measuring about 8" (20.5 cm) long; three ¼" (6 mm) -diameter wooden beads with holes to accommodate the braid, with one different than the other two; 1" (2.5 cm) copper ring; beeswax candle measuring 5 x 1 1/2" diameter (12.5 x 3.8 cm), or any other appealing size; tape, weight or clip for holding threads securely for braiding; scissors; tapestry needle that will fit through the beads.

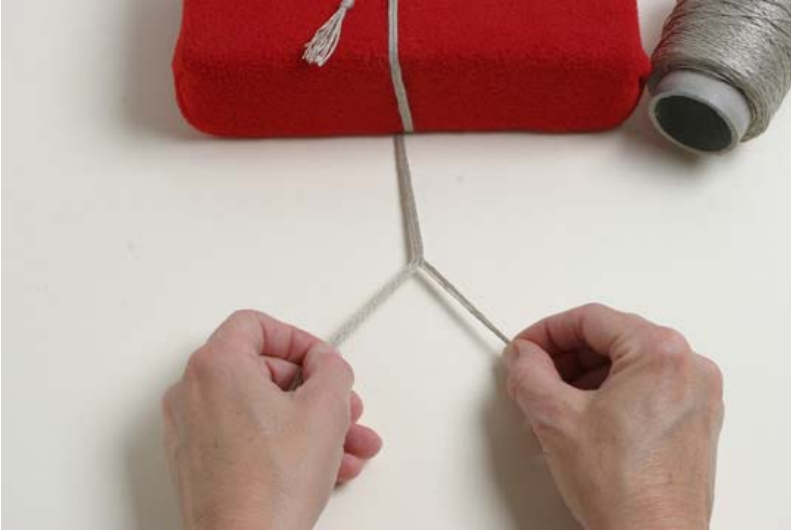
Resources

Euroflax linen yarn can be found at specialty weaving and yarn stores; papyrus is available at specialty paper stores.

Finished Size

Before wrapping the candle, the braid measures 1/8 x 18" (3 x 45.5 cm).

Instructions



1. Cut 11 strands of linen, each 30" (76 cm) long. Tie the ends together and secure to table top with tape, weight, or clip. Follow the step-by-step instructions for 11-strand braiding until braid measures 18" (45.5 cm) long (or long enough to wrap around your candle two times).



2. Wrap candle with papyrus. Thread accent bead onto center of braid, then wrap braid around candle two times.



3. Place the copper ring over the accent bead, then use the needle to thread one of the matching wooden beads onto the braid, wrap the braid around the ring, and then thread the end of the braid back through the same bead. Tighten and tie an overhand knot to secure.



4. Thread the other wooden bead onto the other end of the braid. Encircle the ring with the braid, and run the end back through the bead. Cinch up the braid around the candle as tightly as possible before securing the bead and braid with an overhand knot. Trim ends to about $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.3 cm).

Hint

- The key to a handsome braid is neat edges, and neat edges depend on keeping even tension while working. Yarns under constant tension are easier to work with than slack ones, and give a better result.

Making an 11-strand Sinnet



1. Cut 11 yarn strands of equal length. Divide into two groups with 5 strands in the left-hand group and 6 strands in the right-hand group.

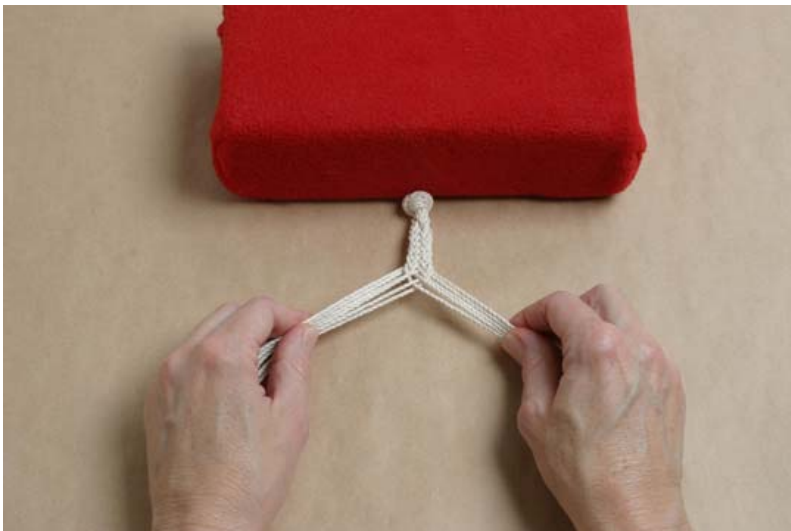


2. Beginning with the right-hand group, take the outside strand over 3 strands, under the next 2 strands, then pass it over to the left-hand group (this strand will now be on the

right side of the left-hand group, or the 6th strand from the left). The left-hand group now has 6 strands.



3. Working from the left-hand group, take the outside strand over 3 strands, under the next 2 strands, then pass it over to the right-hand group (this strand will now be on the left side of the right-hand group, or the 6th strand from the right).



4. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 until the braid is the desired length.

Variations and Other Ideas



A Seven-Strand Variation

A tall, slender candle is accented with filmy white paper and secured with a flat, bulky cotton braid. Because of the bulk of the cotton string, I reduced the number of strands to seven, modifying the braid interlacement to weave over 2, under 1.



Raffia Wrap

Raffia and a vintage brass button give this 11-strand sinnet a rustic look for this candle wrap. The button "hole" was fashioned by dividing the end of the braid into two groups and making two "pigtails." All ends were secured with wrapping of fine cotton yarn. Designed by Jessica Knickman.



Leather Belt Braid

Braided leather makes a handsome one-of-kind belt. I used seven strands instead of eleven because of the bulkiness of the leather. Weave over 2, under 1. Finish with overhand knots or a purchased belt buckle.

Other Braid Ideas



Braids in natural, undyed yarns highlight the fibers' properties and characteristics. These bands would lend an understated elegance that trims or accents, for example, jackets, pillows, or bags. Because I used different-sized yarns, the braids are different widths, even though they all are 11-strand sinnets.

Further Reading

Peter Owens's *The Book of Decorative Knots* (Lyons and Burford, 1994) has super straightforward drawings for all kinds of knots and braids. Very little text is contained in this volume; it is really a compendium of knots but includes a few braids. If you get into braiding in a big way, get your hands on a copy of *Making Kumihimo: Japanese interlaced braids* by Rodrick Owen (Guild of Master Craftsmen Publications Ltd, 2004). Here you'll find excellent instruction, plentiful patterns, and many ideas for making exquisite braids.

The following out-of-print book is worth searching the Web for. Don't be put off by the modest appearance of *Finishes in the Ethnic Tradition* by Suzanne Baizerman and Karen Searle (Dos Tejedoras, 1978). This slim volume with superior line drawings is a great reference manual for edge finishes, joins, and embellishments, including braids.

For more projects like this, check out Jane's book *Time to Weave: Simply Elegant Projects to Make in Almost No Time* available at your favorite weaving or book store, or online at www.interweave.com.