

HOONAH BASKETRY

The roots for the baskets were picked at Spasski. The roots that were probably the best were spruce roots. They were very long and deep in the ground quite aways so the men would sometimes help the women collect the roots. When the roots were picked they were cut into strips and dried. After some time of drying they are again torn into smaller strips just the right size for weaving. The small strips are moistened enough for flexibility. The patterns are formed by strips colored with dye. This dye was made from different soils, barks, weeds, and things like that. A mold was used to form the shape of the baskets while they are being woven. After the white traders came in about the 1800's they suggested to the Indian women that they should make these baskets to sell. From this time on baskets got smaller and the decorations got less colorful and pretty. The baskets were used for many things. The food for the winter was stored in them to keep. They were also used for dishes. The roots were gathered in the early spring or when the frost left the ground. The baskets made today are small and are used mainly for decoration.