There are a few other choice catalogues that I have sent for but have not as yet received. Hopefully, by next month I can share these with you. Be sure to call me if you have any cultivation questions about specific dye plants. I will consult the experts at the Arboretum and put the answers in next month’s column. Many others are probably interested in the same question and we all want to know how to grow the best quality dye plants with the greatest dyeing potential.

OF BASKETS

by Catherine Ingebretsen

"While basketweaving sit with your back to the fire. Be cheerful. Do not think of it as hard work or the basket will not be good." 1

There is much to be said of the mental attitude of a basket weaver; and of his/her physical surroundings.

It is important that you want to do the basket; that you like the materials that you are using; and that you choose a technique or combination of techniques that will give you the results you desire within your time limits. It is also important that you try to do your best work while keeping your mind open to the possibilities of change. You must remember that each material has its own characteristics and be willing to work within the material’s limits. You should look at the limitations positively. For instance, if you are using an irregular basketry material, which is causing your basket to bubble or pucker, you have a number of choices: 1) Accept the way it’s bubbling; 2) Make the material more regular (even); 3) Accentuate the puckering and maybe go into a sculptural piece in which you and others would find the puckering interesting rather than defective; and 4) Change materials. If you take the attitude of an admiring the materials for not doing what you want, you’ll find the basket terribly tedious and disagreeable to weave.

You will hopefully find a happy medium where you and the materials are working together.

Your mental attitude is not only affected by the materials and techniques you are working with, but also by your physical surroundings. Have you ever woven a basket sitting by a stream on a warm summer day? By a campfire while your friends play music? In your back yard in between hanging out loads of washing? In the bathtub while you are soaking? In your bed when you can’t sleep at night? You really should try to be physically comfortable when you are making a basket.

Being comfortable and thinking positive will not insure you a beautiful basket. Nor will it eliminate the pains and disappointments that are often part of the creative process.

What it can do though, is help you to work with the pains and disappointments and make the best basket that you can, with the most enjoyment possible.