

1. Creating a willow Arbour



Willow is a fast growing, flexible material which is perfect for creating a variety of different structures, either living or non-living, that can provide unusual focal points or practical areas in any open space. There are many species of willow available, some with slender stems, in a variety of colours, used for intricate weaving & basketmaking, while others provide long, thick stems suitable for heavy weaving & outdoor living structures.

*Willow Arbour – Tools required. (*Optional)*

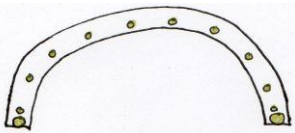
Length of hose or rope – Secateurs – Loppers* – String or garden twine* – Single use and / or reusable cable ties* – Spade – Weed suppressant sheeting* - 36 x 9'+ heavy willow – Up to 50 stems 7'+ basketmaking willow – bag(s) of bark chippings* ~25 x Thin willow stems for lashing*



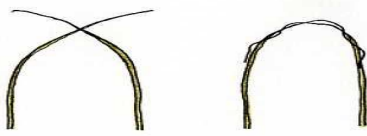
1. It is useful to dig a shallow trench, approximately 12" wide, in a semi - circle, for the length required for the arbour, to minimise competition from weeds and more vigorous grasses. This can be dug over & filled with a layer of compost or simply slice a layer of turf off, turn it over and place it back in the trench. (Weed suppressant sheeting could also be used). Or remove turf and fill trench with bark chippings when finished.



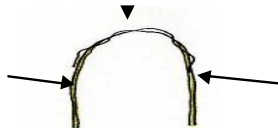
2. Continue the trench for the length of the arbour required. (around the outside of a hose as shown here) then take the bolt of thickest & longest willow rods and lay them out on the ground. Generally, the spacings between uprights for a 8' arbour would normally be about 1' apart, so 9 uprights would be required initially for the rear. Then select the two longest, thickest uprights you have. These will form the front arch. Once the trench is complete you can start to plant the front uprights.



3. Now you can start to plant the front uprights for the arch. For best results, willow stems pushed into the ground to between 4" & 6" and left to stand upright. If needed, twist the willow round so it is as upright as possible and bending towards the upright on the other side.



4. Meeting the stems in the middle, you can then twist each side over the opposite upright, to create a rough arch. This is where cable ties are very useful and can be attached to the highest central part to hold the shape or either side, though twisting and pulling the willow through tight should suffice.



5. If using cable ties, these can be snipped off close to the fastening so no hazards are left.



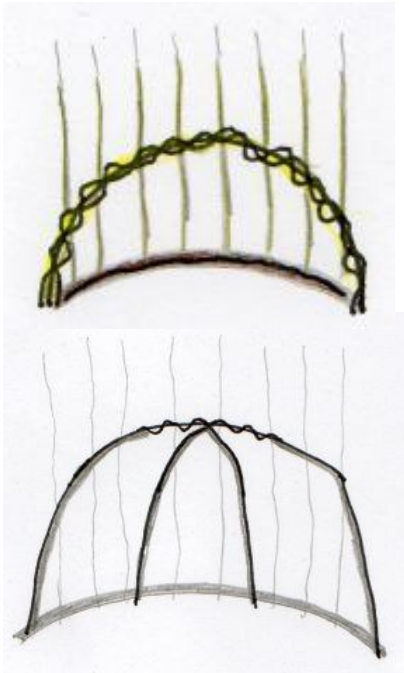
6. Once these have been tied in you can add further stems to the front arch by planting close to the base and twisting in, securing the ends by pulling through a gap in the first arch stems or by using cable ties or twine. The arch can be as thick as required by adding more long uprights and twisting them in.



7. Once you are happy with the desired thickness of the front archway (and it is not too heavy), you can move on to the rear arbour structure.

8. Bearing in mind that you can always add further stems in the future, you have a choice for the rear uprights. Using single thick stems, approximately 1' apart will be quick and easy but will not be as strong and could look unsightly if any of the stems fail to take and root properly.





Either;

Push all the uprights into the ground, as straight as possible, then for each stem, plant and twist around each stem a second upright or more, to achieve both a nice effect and additional strength.

Or;

Continue with single stem uprights for the moment and weave in further uprights once the arch is finished.

9. Push each upright, (or woven uprights) in to the ground around the semi-circle, evenly spaced. Leave the uprights as straight as possible, though twist round slightly so that they are facing towards the arch rather than away from it.



10. Then, either curve over two rear uprights as shown and twist around the front arch so they meet as they touch the front arch. OR Curve them over to meet the front arch but keep relatively straight as to their planting position (i.e don't curve over to meet each other).

This will help to thicken the front arch anyway. Try and keep the rear uprights as 'bowl shaped' and aligned as possible so they curve over nicely to allow enough space for a bench once the structure is finished.



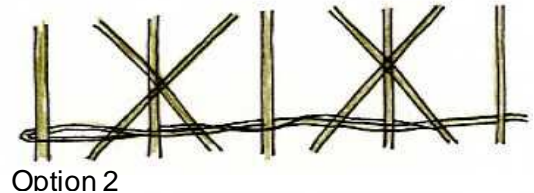
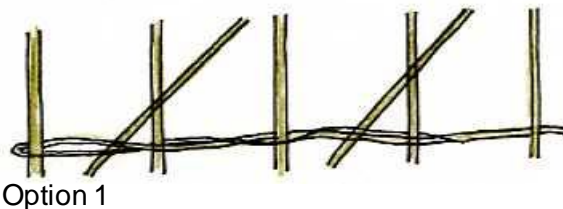


11. All of the other rear uprights can then be curved over to meet the front arch & carefully twisted round and along the arch, which will make this both thicker and more secure.



12. Additional stems can be woven around each upright (as many as desired). Remember to plant these as close to the 1st stem in each case (i.e. where the new stem is to be wrapped around)

13. Once all the front arch and rear uprights are completed and fairly solid, you can then be as creative as you wish. The rear of the structure can be woven in various different ways, such as the examples below. Remember to push the butt (thick end) in close to an existing planted stem if you also want any extra weaving to grow.



14. Or you can simply make the lower part of the rear of the structure a bit more solid by weaving back – behind – back – behind with the butt (thick end) pushed into the ground if you want these stems living too.



As an example, we have thickly woven hoops to the rear of the structure, with all stems pushed into the ground. Circular woven windows could be added and once the main structure is complete, it really is about being as creative as you wish.

15. Now the willow arbour is nearly complete, spend some time to tie any loose ends, particularly where any stem touches or crosses an upright. If these are tied now, the arbour will retain a solid structure, which will then be enhanced by the first seasons growth. Any new growth can be either cut in late autumn or woven in during the summer to create a thicker fuller effect. It really does enhance a structure if thin willow can be used to lash stems together. This structure was completed using entirely willow, with no ties or string.

16. Once everything has been tied, the last step is to give the arbour a good watering, making sure that all the uprights have been soaked. For this, it is sometimes better to leave a trench rather than replace the turfs as a bucket of water down each trench is usually sufficient.

At this point you can empty the bags of bark chippings into the trench if you wish, enough to fill it to ground level or an inch or two above.

After this, keep a check that all stems appear green and healthy and have sufficient water, then wait for the first growth to appear in spring, maybe add a seat and enjoy!



**** Please note, the rear woven hoop design may require more willow, depending on how elaborate you want the structure to be ****

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