

How to weave a willow harlequin tree

Creating a willow harlequin tree is a fun, creative and engaging activity for children. Follow these simple steps to craft your own:

Materials needed

- 30 willow 'whips'. These are freshly cut willow branches available online (try eBay). They are relatively inexpensive and are available from November to the end of March. For the best results you'll need a particular type of willow - *Salix Viminalis*.
- A medium sized pot filled with compost. Remember to put some gravel / stones at the bottom to help with drainage.
- Secateurs (pruning shears).
- A bag of cable ties - you'll probably need around 20 or so.



Instructions

1

Prepare the base

- Fill a small pot with soil and make five evenly spaced holes around the outside of the pot with your fingers.
- Put 6 willow whips into each hole. These should be arranged in 2 rows of three, with one row positioned slightly in front of the other so you have an inner row of willow and an outer row of willow in each of the 5 holes.

2

Start weaving

- Arrange the whips so they cross over each other, forming a twisting, crisscross harlequin pattern.
- The inner branches should be moved to the outside. So the inner row on hole number 1 moves to the outside of the outer row on hole number 2. The outer row of hole number 1 moves in the opposite direction and is positioned on the inside of the inner row from hole number 5.



3**Secure as you go**

- Use cable ties at intervals to hold the shape in place while weaving.
- Continue weaving until you reach the desired height.

4**Finishing touches**

- Gently press the soil down around the base to keep everything compact and stable.
- Remove all cable ties except the top row, which helps the branches fuse together as they grow.
- Trim the tops of the stems, leaving about two inches above the highest tie.

Caring for your tree

Keep the willow well-watered to help it establish roots.

After 4-6 weeks, new shoots will begin to grow along the stem. To maintain the tree's shape, remove any shoots from the lower part of the trunk, allowing growth to focus on the top.

Over time, your twisted willow tree will thicken and take on a beautiful, structured form. It will be a real statement plant in the garden and something that your child / children will be really proud of.

You could also use willow whips to create living huts, dens, arches and sculptures.

Video Instructions

You can find a video explaining this technique here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ce4kWcTZ7jQ&t=36s>

