

Harriett Bailem Brown

Interviewed by Saddler Taylor

Details on collecting palmetto (03:00)

<Video begins with H. Brown and another cutting a palm frond>

H. Brown: You wanna cut it here, so it won't ruin the tree. Realize that the palmetto is always growing in the middle part of the tree. Take a while to get this but...And this is how you wanna make sure you have a hard butt on it. So when you cut it, it won't destroy the tree. Now this palmetto is too wide open *<fans out frond>* to make sweetgrass basket. We don't usually use it.

S. Taylor: What do you mean by too wide open?

H. Brown: See? See this is open already. If this really-this gonna fan out like these ones and grow back up. It's gonna grow into a limb. It's not ready yet.

<Video shows H. Brown working with a useable piece of palm>

H. Brown: Pull it out like this. See the sun is a very good thing for human and the [natural's color]. And you pull these out and the sun-we let it air in the sun for maybe a day or sometime you can do it less than a day. It depends on the palmetto's dryness. And then we would slit it down. This is the palm. You'll find some people call it ['metto], some said palmetto, and then some say it's palm. It all means the same thing.

McKissick Staff: And how long have you been doing this?

H. Brown: I've been doing basket going now on sixty years. Sixty years.

McKissick Staff: And what age did you start?

H. Brown: I start when I was four years old. Four years old.

S. Taylor: So I imagine you have to lay those out to dry right?

H. Brown: Yeah.

S. Taylor: Before you actually make a basket with it.

H. Brown: Yeah, right. See we would-this part is no good to work with. It's too hard. Just gonna take my finger and show you.

<Video zooms in on palmett>