



EXPANDING THE ACTIVITY:

Fieldtrips

Mat weaving is a fairly narrow field so few museums focus on this topic. You will find mat weaving incorporated into agriculture, household, textile, and building construction exhibits and collections. Below are a few suggestions, but you should explore museums that are close to home and remember to ask the curator about mats or weavings.

- The National Museum of the American Indian, One Bowling Green, NY
212-514-3700
<http://www.nmai.si.edu/index.cfm>
Native American art and artifacts.
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street, New York, New York 10028
212-535-7710
<http://www.metmuseum.org/>
Weaving, textiles, and clothing from different time periods.
- The Farmer's Museum, Cooperstown, NY
888-547-1405
<http://www.farmersmuseum.org/>
Plants and fibrous artifacts from pioneer America.
- Historic Richmond Town, 441 Clarke Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10306
718-351-1611
<http://www.historicrichmondtown.org/index.html>
A living history and museum village with furnished interiors.

Adaptations to the activity:

Try weaving long cinnamon sticks with closely spaced warp yarns to make a trivet with an inviting aroma.

Or, instead of supplying mat materials, set up the looms outdoors and ask youth to collect natural materials that they weave into their artwork. Perhaps they will discover interesting plant stems, colorful leaves, bean pods, pinecones, and more.

Grow Plants for Weaving Mats

Because so many plants can be used to weave mats, growing (or adopting) a weaving garden is easy. Some species may already be thriving in your own backyard or along your roadsides. If you prefer cultivated plants, try these online resources for buying seeds.

Goldenrod: *Solidago species*. The many different species of goldenrod grow in most soils and reach up to five feet in height. These hardy perennials bloom from August to October.

Wildflower Farm:

<http://www.wildflowerfarm.com/>

Garden Adventures:

<http://www.garden-adventures.com/site/854358/page/45029>

Cattail: *Typha latifolia*. Cattails need moist soil or lots of watering to grow well,. They will grow up to six feet tall within the first year.

Local Harvest:

<http://www.localharvest.org/store/seeds.jsp>

Whatcom Seed Company:

<http://seedrack.com/>

Milkweed: *Asclepias species*. Seeds can be gathered from pods in the fall, but they must be kept in a refrigerator for 2-3 months before they can germinate. They grow 3-4 feet tall and are the host plant for the Monarch butterfly. It's best if you start them indoors.

Milkweed Farm:

<http://www.milkweedfarm.com/catalog.asp?st=NY>

Butterfly Encounters:

<http://www.butterflyencounters.com/>

Ornamental Grasses: *Miscanthus and other species*. Many grass varieties are available. Most grow tall and some are hard to germinate, so make sure you buy seeds appropriate for your climate and soil.

Thompson and Morgan:

<http://seeds.thompson-morgan.com/us/en/index>

Seedman.com:

<http://www.seedman.com/Orngrass.htm>

Burpee:

<http://www.burpee.com/index.jsp>

Are You a Mat Master?

Just for fun, try this True/False Quiz.

If you need help, you can...

- Log-on to the internet or
 - spend an hour at your local library
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Questions:

1. T or F Cloth called “jerga” was very expensive and used to make clothes for the wealthy.
2. T or F Finger woven sashes are also known as “ceinture fleche”.
3. T or F Plain weave and twill weave are the same thing.
4. T or F Aramid fibers are flame-resistant.
5. T or F "Koub-bafi" is the authentic native mat weaving technique of the people of northern Iran.
6. T or F “Maslond” mats are popular fine-quality mats, usually produced in Egypt.
7. T or F Native Americans sometimes used sewn cattail mats for the walls of their wigwams.
8. T or F Sitalpi mats are mats made in the Cachher district of Assam, India. They are reputed to be very smooth and render a feeling of coolness.
9. T or F Modern-day soundproofing mats are made of thick layers of bast fibers.
10. T or F Although mats can be strong, they can NOT substitute for lumber as construction materials.

Answers:

1. **F** Jerga was rough fabric used for cheap clothes or floor coverings.
2. **T** Look up finger weaving to learn more about this tradition.
3. **F** If you search these terms you will find that there are many different kinds of weaves.
4. **T** Aramid fibers are used in flame-resistant clothing, protective vests, and more.
5. **T** Many parts of the world still practice traditional mat weaving.
6. **F** While they are popular and fine-quality, they are usually made in West Bengal.
7. **T** Search “sewn cattail mats” to see the differences between sewn and woven mats.
8. **T** Many different types of mats are woven around the world, including the sitalpi mats of India.
9. **F** Modern day soundproofing mats are very thin and made of a mineral loaded flexible thermoplastic polymer.
10. **F** A company has developed a cost-effective way of making plywood-like boards from bamboo mats woven by low income, rural women. The mats are coated with glue and hot-pressed to produce the mat boards, which can then be used to build houses, packing cases, storage bins and carts, among other things.