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Basket

Because of the large number of *Tu Tangata* readers who replied to our questionnaire asking for articles about Maori craftwork, we've reprinted an article about basket weaving, from *Te Ao Hou* No. 3, 1953.

It is based on advice given by three *kuia* and partly on the account in *Te Rangi Hiroa's The Coming of the Maori*.

1. When cutting flax for weaving never cut the complete bush. Leave at least the two inner leaves of each bush standing. Not only are these less suitable for the general run of jobs, but leaving them promotes growth.
2. The leaves are split in halves. Notice the water drops on the picture. Flax should never be wetter than this when cut for weaving. It may split the hands if picked just after rain. Intense sun is no better; it dries the flax too much. Frost makes it too brittle. The weather should be just right.
3. Stripping is done with the thumb-nail. For this basket, the strips are used as they are now. The finer and more ornamental type of basket goes through the processes of boiling and dressing. By dressing is meant the scraping of each boiled strip with a shell to make it pliable and prevent curling.
4. The end of each strip is scraped with a paua shell to clear a tuft of fibre.
5. The tufts are braided into a three-ply braid called *whiri* by means of strips added alternately on each side.
6. The braid is secured by an overhand knot at the end.