

Square Wooden Basket Cutting Guide

By Eric Milstrey, St. Augustine Orchid Society

This cutting guide is designed for most orchid basket needs, with a basket depth of about three inches. Some may wish for deeper baskets, especially for plants that are transferred from deep pots or if used to go around some Vandas that have encased their existing basket. If that is required, just add more side pieces. For fast-growing orchids like Cattleya, you can use pine, but if the basket is to last 4 years or more, use harder woods or rot-resistant woods like cedar or cypress.

Steps to make these baskets:

1. **Rip the Boards:** Rip boards into $\frac{3}{4}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ " strips using a table saw, band saw, or a circular saw with a guide jig. Using standard 1-inch lumber (which is actually $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick) from a hardware store is the simplest method, as it only requires one $\frac{1}{2}$ " rip adjustment. 1x3, 1x4, or 1x6 boards are relatively inexpensive at 8-foot lengths.
2. **Cut to Length:** Cut the strips to your desired basket length. Note that the basket's internal width will be 1.5 inches less than the side length (e.g., a plant in a 6-inch pot requires an 8-inch basket).
3. **Drill Wire Holes:** Create a paper template of a side piece. At each end, mark a $\frac{3}{4}$ " square and draw an "X" from corner to corner to find the center. Use a pen or preferably an awl to mark the drill spots on the wood. For the inner floor pieces, use a small bit to pre-drill holes for the $\frac{3}{4}$ " to $\frac{7}{8}$ " nails. For all other pieces, switch to a drill bit slightly larger than your corner wire.
4. **Secure the Bottom:** Lay down the bottom two pieces and place the exterior side pieces on top. Insert stout nails (like roofing nails) upward through the corner holes to maintain alignment. Evenly space the center cross-slats between the side pieces and nail them into place using the pre-drilled holes to prevent splitting. Ensure the nails do not protrude through the bottom. If building a large basket, nail in the center cross brace now.
5. **Prepare the Wire:** Cut four pieces of wire to $7\frac{1}{2}$ " lengths. Using needle-nose pliers, form a small loop at one end and bend it 90 degrees to create a "foot." Insert the wires through the corner holes of the bottom assembly, ensuring the floor slats face upward.
6. **Build the Sides:** Thread the side pieces over the wires, alternating directions for each layer until you reach the desired height.
7. **Form Top Loops:** Ensure the bottom wire loop feet are aligned with the bottom piece. Use needle-nose pliers to twist the top wire away from the corner to form a loop. Reposition

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your pliers and continue twisting in a spiral until the wire is flush with the wood, clamping the basket tightly. Repeat for all four corners.

8. Adjust for Depth: For deeper baskets, increase the wire length by approximately ½" for every additional pair of side pieces.
9. For smaller orchids, such as Tolumnia, the pieces should be smaller, and ½ x ½ is recommended.
10. Happy Growing

Square Basket Side Width (inches)	Number of Pieces Required for the Sides	Number of Cross Pieces Required for the Base	Number of Pieces Required for the Base	Total Number of Pieces Required***
4*	12	2 or 3		14 -15
6	16	4		20
8	16	6		22
10	16	7		23
12	16	9		25
14**	16	11	1	28
16**	16	13	1	30
*4-inch baskets can be made with 1/2 x 1/2 or 1/2 x 3/4 pieces				
**Baskets over 12 in needs center brace for strength				
***always cut one or more pieces than you need for breakage				

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Basket Sticks



Basket Pieces



Mark the Corner Hole for the Wire



Use Stout Nails to Line Up Bottom



Evenly Space the Cross Pieces



Insert Wire and Twist Bottom



Insert Bottom Cross Piece (if used)



Alternate Adding Side Pieces



Form Top of Wire into Loop

Insert Bottom Cross Piece (if used) Alternate Adding Side Pieces Form Top of Wire into Loop