

Rub-On Bark Tanning - Tanning Advert

Very Short Instructor Bio:

Theresa is an avid practitioner of traditional living skills and primitive technology of all kinds. An interest which came in part from growing up in the Rocky Mountains in the USA, where backpacking, hunting and fishing were part of the culture. She has followed this interest into the academic field of Experimental Archaeology in which she holds a PhD from the University of Exeter in the UK. Theresa has been tanning skins using traditional technologies for over 25 years. Learning to tan was a natural offshoot of the attempt to use as much of the animal as possible and had the added bonus of producing a beautiful end product. She includes in her instruction a diverse range of information, from skin morphology to helpful hints in dealing with the numerous and frustrating problems which are often encountered when first learning to tan.

Short class description:

Before the advent of modern tanning agents, humans were turning raw skin into usable leather products using very basic techniques and materials. Learn to produce soft, strong and durable leather from raw animal skin using one of human kind's earliest tanning technologies! Utilizing materials readily available in the surrounding environment we will walk through the steps of this transformation. Come learn the progression of this process from raw skin to beautiful, usable, finished leather!

Over 3 full days this course will focus on tanning young goat skins with the hair on using a variety of vegetable tanning (bark tanning), using a rub on method as opposed to a soaking method. This method requires much smaller containers and shorter tanning time than the later varieties of vegetable tanning which, for large skins, can take as long as 12 months for the tannins to fully penetrate. This method has been practiced in most of the circumpolar region and in a number of desert areas of the world. Whilst not for the squeamish the end product is worth the work! The class will cover rehydrating and washing the furs, removing the meat and fat (de-fleshing), applying the tanning and dressing agents and softening the skins.

In addition to enthusiastic instruction I provide comfortable, easy to use tools and detailed handouts covering the tanning process, as well as ethnographic anecdotes and a list of helpful literature for those who wish to further their own knowledge of tanning! So, please join me for a course sure to contain plenty of memorable moments, lots of practical information and, provided that you put in the work **, one that will see you heading home with a beautiful, unique and usable fur!

** Please be aware that a reasonable amount of fitness is required for this course. I will provide instruction on good technique and timing with the skins, but you will need to be able to be on your feet and active for 6 to 8 hours per day.

Basic Schedule:

Day 1 starts on the dot at 10 am. Days 2 and 3 at 9 am.

Day 1: Start bark solutions, Wash skins, De-flesh, Dry fur as much as possible, 1st Bark solution application.

Day 2: Work skins, 2nd Bark solution application, Final Drying and Softening process.

Day 3: Finish drying and softening if needed, Question and Answer session, Clean up.