



Fómhar

Weaving Abundance
into Furniture

Final Year Project

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Nature First Design

Design Research Topic

Fómhar explores how regenerative design principles can be applied to furniture making in an Irish woodland context. It asks whether the act of making can restore rather than consume.

The piece is a forager's cabinet, built from a sweet chestnut frame with the body woven from split hazel. It opens upward to reveal a worktop for processing foraged plants for tea, with woven basket drawers below for storing them.

Each material is abundant, regenerates when cut, and supports the ecology around it. Hazel, willow, nettle and bramble are harvested across the four seasons, each using a distinct heritage craft technique drawn from coppicing, splitwood weaving and cordage making.

The materials were chosen because they are ecologically beneficial to harvest and deeply rooted in Irish craft and folklore and yet largely overlooked since the decline of managed native woodland.



Regenerative Design

Woodland Ecology

Regenerative design moves beyond sustainability, which only aims to sustain, toward practices that actively restore ecosystems through the act of making.

In an Irish context the mechanism is coppicing: the cyclical harvesting of broadleaf trees that regenerate from their root systems after felling. Cutting, opens the woodland canopy, light reaches the floor, ground flora returns and pollinators arrive. A coppiced woodland in active rotation supports far greater biodiversity than an unmanaged one.

Returning to a coppice in Wicklow a year after harvesting, I witnessed the cycle firsthand: primrose flowering on newly opened ground and hazel regenerating strongly from the cut stools. That direct experience became foundational to the project.

The act of taking becomes the act of giving back. A woodland that pays is a woodland that stays.



Coppiced hazel regenerating · Rosscahill, Co. Galway

Design Development

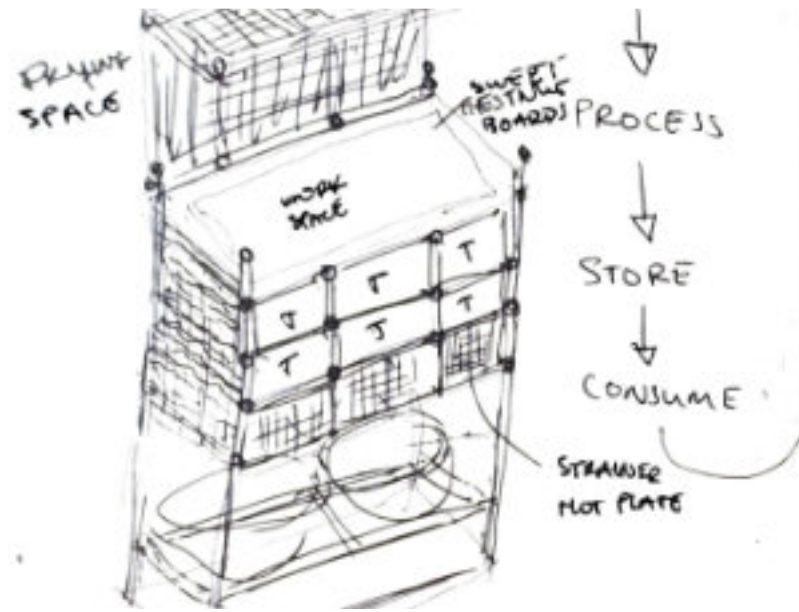
A Material-Led Form

The design began with constraints rather than a fixed form. The piece needed woven basket drawers, a worktop for processing, a space for drying plants, and a structure, all built entirely from regenerative materials.

Sketching was used as a problem-solving tool working out how the lid pivots and locks, where the eyeline falls, and how each basket sits within the frame. Early concepts explored round greenwood, but its unpredictability made precise joinery difficult.

The resolved frame uses open bridle joints cut while the components are still angular, before the curved profiles are machined. Following tutorials, the design settled on a curved front that emphasises the woven surface, with a more angular back that gives the structure its rigidity.

The organic quality of the weaving leads visually, while the construction remains achievable.



The Four Seasons

A full cycle of harvest and making, contained within a single piece of furniture. The sweet chestnut frame holds four basket drawers, each crafted from a different foraged material gathered in its own season using a distinct, near-forgotten craft technique.



Winter · Hazel

Coll

Splitwood weaving - rods split into fine splints and woven onto the frame.



Spring · Willow

Saileach

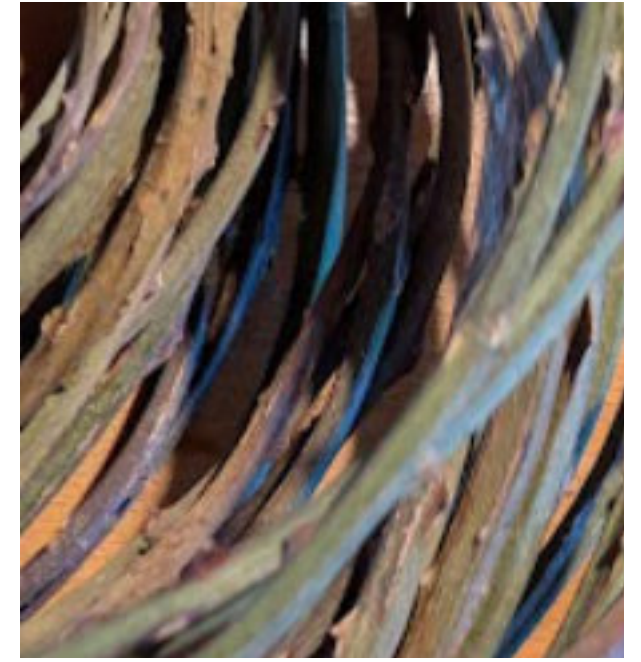
Skeined weaving - stems split into three and dressed to a uniform thickness.



Summer · Nettle

Neantóg

Cordagemaking - bast fibres extracted and twisted into string.



Autumn · Bramble

Dris

Stem weaving - thorn-stripped stems looped, dried and re-soaked to weave.

Splitting Hazel

Raw material

Hazel grows in moist, limestone-rich soils. Coppiced for millennia.

Harvest

Cut in winter while the sap is down. Leave for one week.

Process

Bend the rod over the knee to split along its length.

Dress

Score and peel splints. Remove edges to create flat, consistent weavers.

Make

Splints woven directly onto the sweet chestnut frame. No fixings.

Use

Worktop for processing foraged plants. Hanging space above to dry.

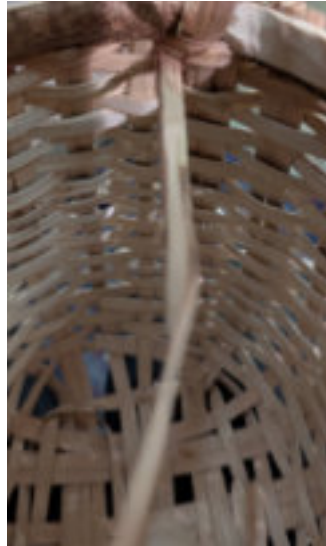
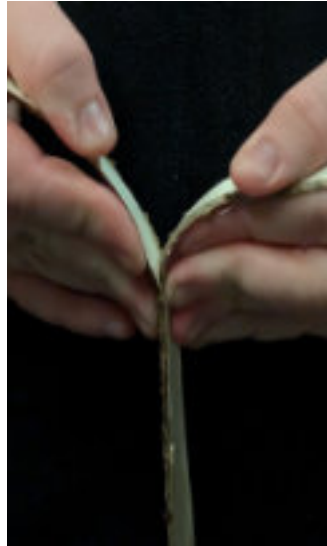
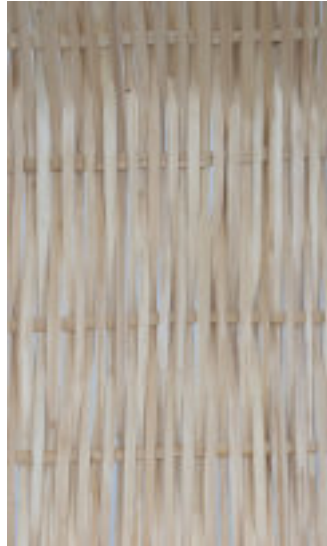
Repair

Woven elements can be replaced. Techniques simple enough for anyone.

Return

Coppiced stools regrow. Primrose and ground flora return. The cycle begins.

Hazel —Cull—Winter harvest —Splitwood weaving





The Wicklow Chip

The Wicklow chip is an extinct Irish basket, once made in Co. Wicklow from boiled oak. It belongs to the same family as the Cumbrian swill basket but takes a circular form with a weaving pattern all its own.

The making begins with billets cleft from the sapwood of thirty- to forty-year-old oak, boiled until supple and then riven down into fine weavers the boiling leaving the wood with its characteristic dark, ebonised tone.

This extinct craft is the inspiration behind the piece and learning how to make one unlocked a new found passion for my local craft heritage.



Final Piece

Fómhar is a forager's cabinet built from a sweet chestnut frame with a body woven directly in split hazel. It demonstrates that woven, coppiced and foraged materials can be integrated into contemporary furniture without compromise on quality or refinement.

The piece opens to reveal a worktop for processing foraged plants, a drying space above, and compartments below for four seasonal basket drawers. Every material is organic, abundant, and regenerates when harvested and at the end of its life it biodegrades.

Dimensions

W 750 × D 625 × H 925 (closed) / 1500 (open)

Materials

Irish Sweet Chestnut, split Hazel, Willow, Nettle & Bramble

Finish

Gell's furniture polish beeswax, linseed oil & turpentine



Photos by Conor Doherty