

Willow domes and structures

Use willow rods to create a series of tunnels, domes, hiding places and play spaces on open ground or ride sides. Create tunnels through existing shrubs.

HOW TO CREATE >>>

- Willow stems can be used dead, as in basket weaving, or living. *Salix viminalis* (Osier Willow) is the most suitable species, though there are other coloured stemmed varieties (*daphnoides*, *purpurea* and *alba*).
- October–March: Plant willow rods with 20 mm diameter stem base at 0.5 m intervals using a metal bar to first create the hole. Insert the stem at least 90 mm and firm into place. Smaller stems can be planted diagonally between the main stems and

horizontal bands can be woven and fixed with twine or ties to strengthen the structure. Stems planted diagonally produce more branching; vertical stems just grow long.

- Clear weeds and grass before planting, water regularly during the summer, mulch with cut grass and weave in new shoots ensuring no trip hazards or protruding ends at eye level.
- Will need to be maintained and rewoven regularly. Worn paths will need maintaining and may need formalising with compacted stone.

Alternative

Using existing coppice areas (hazel or sweet chestnut) create tunnels and domes with rope, tying together over-arching stems.

Useful contacts

- Search the internet for local willow sculptors.
- For details of planting and a list of practitioners in SW England see p29 of 'Growing Spaces for Play' by ROSPA.

