

Robin and Mary Reed

“We have worked with natural materials that are available to us in our surroundings, in our environment here in the woods, . . . our inspiration comes from the beauty of the nature around us.”

Robin and Mary Reed left the hustle and bustle of their hometown of Lexington, Kentucky, in the 1970s. They settled on a homestead in the Daniel Boone National Forest in rural Estill County. They both have degrees from the University of Kentucky. Mary’s degree is in fine arts and Robin’s is in architecture. When they moved “back to the land,” they learned heritage and survival skills. They learned how to farm with horses, heating with wood, and making natural crafts. They learned from their neighbors in Estill County.

Their first crafts business was candle-making. By the early 1980s, handmade candles lost popularity. They needed a new business. They considered the materials available on their homestead. Robin began making baskets from the bark of tulip poplar and willow trees. The baskets are both functional and decorative. Mary learned from corn shuck artists how to use the outer shucks of corn. She creates corn shuck flowers, dolls, angels, and nativity sets.

For 35 years Robin and Mary have produced beautiful handmade crafts. They teach crafts workshops. They have an earth-friendly approach to life. They raise organic mushrooms. They are active in food cooperatives. They have been leaders in the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen and the Kentucky Appalachian Artisan Center.



What natural materials are there in your environment that could be used for creating crafts?