

# Latewood from ash as raw material for baskets and boxes



Georg Winner<sup>1</sup>, Hans Reschreiter<sup>2</sup>, Michael Grabner<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna – BOKU, Austria

<sup>2</sup>Natural history Museum Vienna, Austria

[georg.winner@boku.ac.at](mailto:georg.winner@boku.ac.at), [hans.reschreiter@nhm-wien.ac.at](mailto:hans.reschreiter@nhm-wien.ac.at), [michael.grabner@boku.ac.at](mailto:michael.grabner@boku.ac.at)



## The original findings:

In Europe ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) strips were used for over 2500 years, from iron age boxes found in the Hallstatt salt mine to baskets for heavy loads in historic times in the Salzkammergut region and the Mostviertel.



The original chip box from Hallstatt.



A historic basket made of ash latewood

## The splitting technique:

By hammering a radially split board of the ringporous wood, the large thin-walled earlywood vessels collapse. The latewood separates from the earlywood, leaving strips in boardlength and -width. If the latewood is too thick, it can be split down to the desired dimension. The reconstruction of the process proofed it to be relatively easy and quick by applying the right technique.



## The reconstruction of the chip box:

The very thick annual growth rings were split to gain the right thickness. The bands then were drilled, striated and afterwards soaked in water. Before the actual bending, the bands were heated in hot water. As binding material split spruce roots were used.



Used tools and materials: Draw knife, knife, awl, ash latewood bands, spruce roots

## Technology link:

This technology is also known in North America, where black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) is used for basketry by a number of indigenous tribes in Canada and the US. It is not known if there is any kind of technology transfer because of the colonisation.

## Literature:

Reschreiter, H. 2009. Fein verziert im Untergrund: Spanschachteln der älteren Eisenzeit. Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft Wien. 139, 115-121  
Bussel Van, G., Steinmann, A. 2011. Wald Baum Mensch. Museum für Völkerkunde Wien. Ausstellungskatalog. 251-253