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# LEATHERCRAFT

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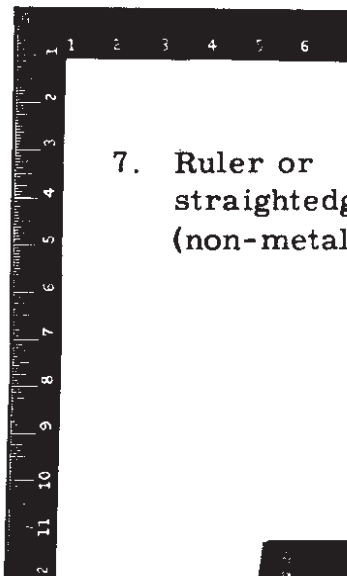
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The original bulletin was developed under the guidance of John A. Kiesow, formerly Extension Specialist, 4-H—Youth and revisions by Duane P. Johnson, State 4-H leader, Oregon State University. This circular was adapted from material prepared by Mrs. Ruth Moe of the State 4-H Department, University of Wyoming. Special acknowledgment is given to the Tandy Leather Company for information and illustrations, and to Harold Starr and Mrs. Patricia Hitchcock, a 4-H volunteer leader. Other information was obtained from "General Leathercraft," by Raymond Cherry; "Leathercraft," by James A. Schwalbach, University of Wisconsin; "Leather Art," by F. O. Baird; and "Lucky Seven," by the Craftool Company. This circular may not be sold without permission from the Tandy Leather Company and others who have provided material for free use by the 4-H program.

# Beginning Leathercraft

There are a good many tools that are needed to do good leather work. However there are many that are only needed once in awhile, so if you go together in your club and buy tools that everyone can use, it will be less expensive. Those tools marked with an asterisk are those which each member should have.

- \*1. Pencil
- \*2. Masking tape or paper clips
- \*3. Tracing paper (or light-weight sheet plastic)
- \*4. Block of marble about 10" to 12" square and an inch or so thick
- 5. Pine cutting board
- 6. Small can Neat-lac or other finish (or saddle soap or wax)



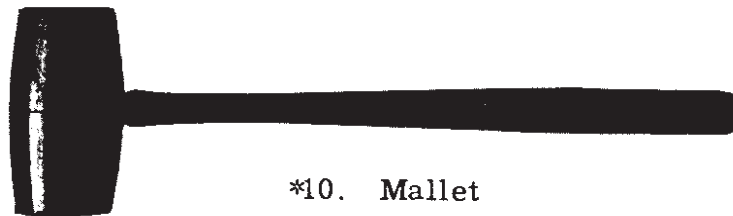
7. Ruler or straightedge (non-metallic)



8. Scissors



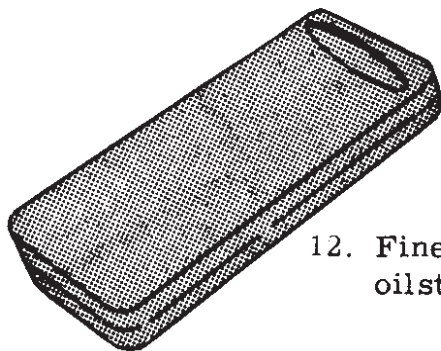
9. Cutting knife



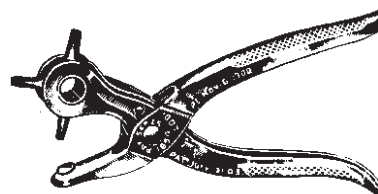
\*10. Mallet



11. Thonging Chisel  
(Use single prong for corners)



12. Fine-grit oilstone

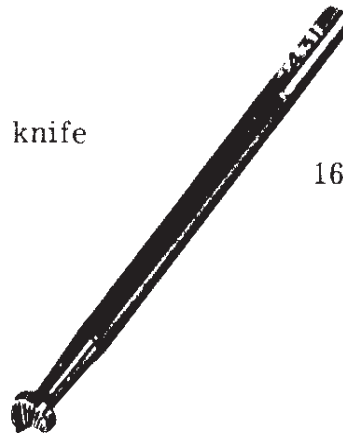


13. Revolving punch

14. Sponge



15. Swivel knife

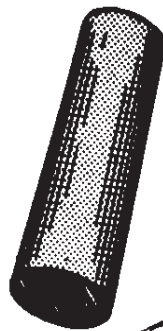


16. Stamping tools

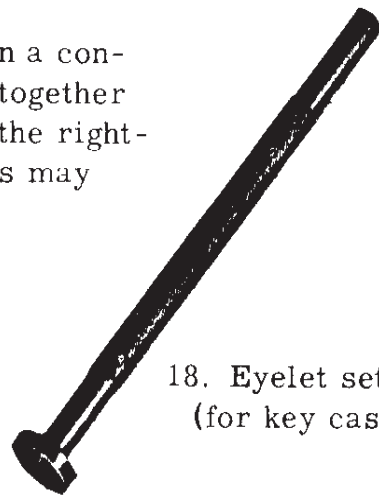
(Your swivel knife and stamps should be kept in a container which will prevent them from knocking together and getting dull. Either a wooden frame with the right-sized holes or a cloth sewed into compartments may be used.)



17. Rubber cement



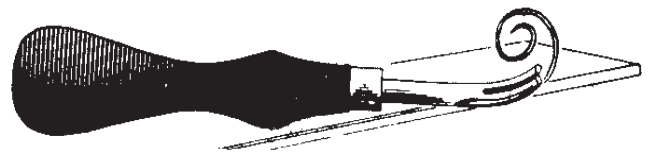
Jeweler's rouge



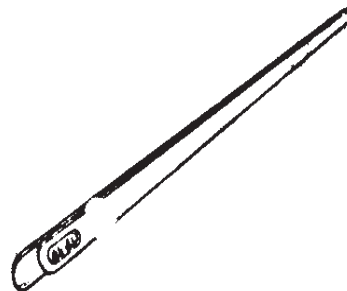
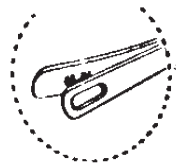
18. Eyelet setter  
(for key case)



19. Jeweler's rouge strap



20. Edge beveler (use for beveling edges of belt or dog collar)



21. Lacing needle



If you are clever with a pencil it will be nice to make your own designs. However, to begin your leather work there are a few designs included in this book; and you may get others from leather stores.

### Tracing Your Design

After you have decided what you want to make, find a design that you like (or make one). Be sure that it fits the space that you want to put it on. If there is lacing to be done, be sure to leave a three-eighths-inch border between your design and the edge.

Trace your design on thin paper--or a thin plastic sheet works real well. Do not trace anything except the main outlines. Do not include the "decorative cuts". (See page 15) Lay your design directly on the leather.



# THE SWIVEL KNIFE



The swivel knife is the most important tool used in leather carving, and it is very important that it be kept sharp. Keep a sharpening stone handy and a strap of cowhide impregnated with jeweler's rouge. Get in the habit of "stropping" your swivel knife every time you pick it up. The rouge strap is prepared by applying neatsfoot oil on a small strap which is then rubbed with a stick of jeweler's rouge.

## Description

The swivel knife consists of three main parts:

1. The saddle: the curved piece of metal fastened at the top in such a manner that it will turn on the rest of the knife, creating a swivel action.
2. The barrel: the cylindrically shaped piece of metal with the saddle attached at one end and the blade at the other.
3. The blade: the piece of metal at the bottom of the knife with the cutting edge at one end and attached to the barrel at the other.

## How to Hold

The knife is held with the end of the forefinger lying in the saddle and the barrel held near the bottom between the thumb and 2nd and 3rd fingers. The side of the little finger rests on the leather to aid in guiding the knife. The knife is tipped away from the body, leaving the back corner of the blade resting on the leather to do the cutting. The broad side of the blade is held so that it is straight up and down.

## How to Cut

Place the leather on your work table so that the design is up. Hold the swivel knife as it tells you above; place the cutting point at the beginning of one of the traced lines. Draw the knife toward your body, following the curves in the line by turning the barrel with the fingers. The pressure on the knife is gradually released at the end of the cut, resulting in a taper. The cuts are made in sections when going around sharp curves in the design.

The leather is turned after each cut so that the next cut will be made toward the body.

Each time you stop (in the middle of a curve), be sure to place the blade back a ways when starting again so that the cut will continue in the same smooth flow.

If the knife has been held straight, the cuts will be wedge shaped. If it has been leaned to either side the result will be an undercut.

Cut this way



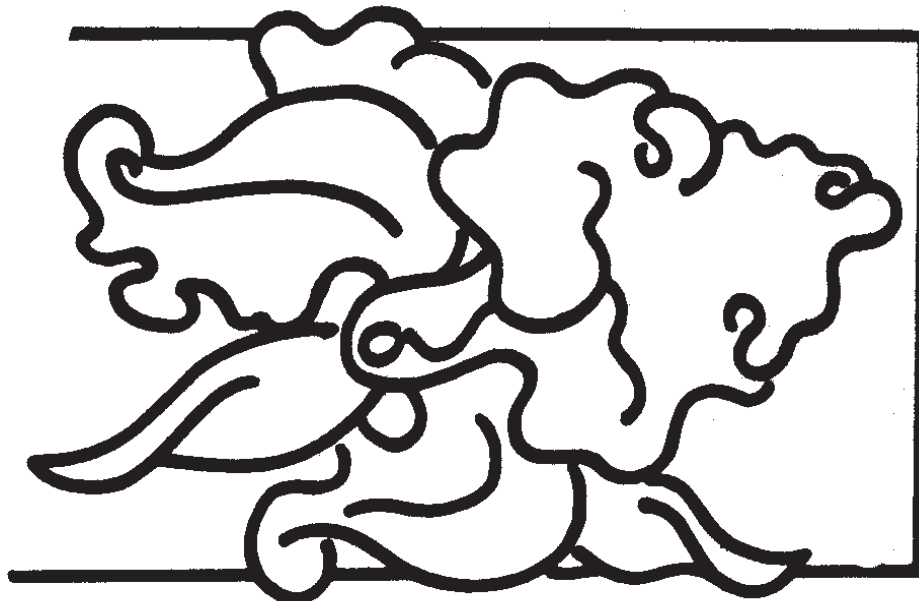
WEDGE CUT

Don't cut this way



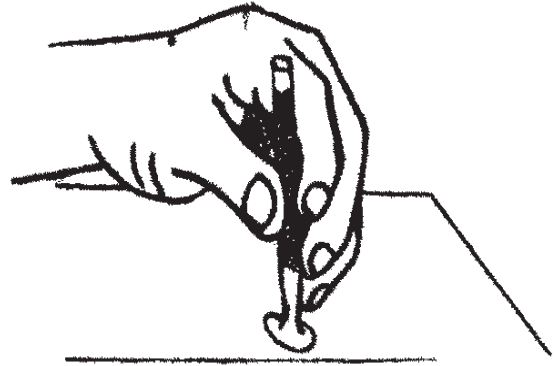
UNDERCUT

## Practice Design



by Ken Gregson

## THE SHADE TOOL



### Description

The shader is a stamp tool with the working end shaped like a raindrop. There are several different kinds, but a medium size with a smooth surface is good to start with.

### Purpose

The shader is used to make the dish-shaped impressions in flower petals, leaves, and down the length of fern swirls. These impressions give the appearance of folds and add to the three-dimension effect which is so necessary to make your design look good.

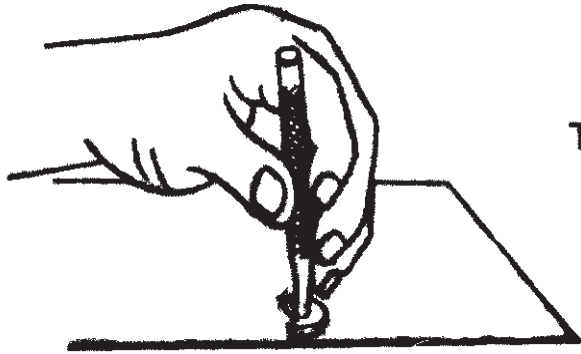
### How to Use

Start the impressions out near the edge of the petals and leaves. Then follow the general contour of the form, staying the same distance from the swivel cuts. The tool is moved slightly as it rebounds after each sharp blow with the mallet. The tapping is gradually lightened as it approaches the camouflage area, giving a dish shape to the impression. The distance between the shaded area and the swivel knife cuts should be from a sixteenth to an eighth of an inch, depending upon the size of the design, but the impression should never extend all the way to the cut.

The rich brown color of the shaded area is obtained by hitting the tool hard and having the leather at the proper moisture content. If the leather seems dry, add more water with a sponge, then let the surface moisture evaporate until the leather turns to near its natural color. A marble block or some other hard, smooth surface is a necessity for good shading.







## THE CAMOUFLAGE TOOL

### Description

The camouflage is a crescent-shaped tool with evenly spaced lines running out from the inside of the crescent much like sunrays.

### Purpose

The camouflage is used to give stems, flower petals, leaves, and fern swirls a ruffled appearance representing folds and small veins. It may also be used to form flower centers and to end fern swirls.

### How to Hold

The shank is held between the thumb and three fingers. The fingers are spread up the length of the shank to furnish support. The side of the little finger rests on the leather as the tool is moved after each tap with the mallet.

### How to Use

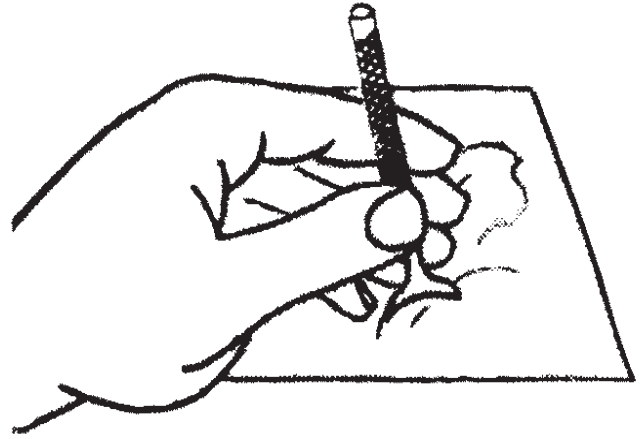
Leaves and Stems. The impressions are started at the bottom of the leaf or stem. The tool is lifted after each tap with the mallet and placed just above the previously made impression. The space between impressions should be uniform. The tap of the mallet is gradually lightened as the tool approaches the top of the leaf. Any marks made on the outside of the stem will be removed later with the beveler.

Flower Petals. The impressions are started at the center of the flower. The tool is worked toward the outside of the petal.

Fern Swirls. The tool is leaned to one side as it is tapped, up and around the swirl. It is spaced evenly and tapped uniformly.



## THE VEINER



### Description

The working end of the veiner is crescent shaped (like a moon).

### Purpose

The veiner is used to form the veins branching from the center ribs of large leaves. It is also used around the edge of fern swirls and to make folds in the petals of flowers.

### How to Use

The veins are formed in the leaves by starting at the stem end and working toward the tip. The length of the vein is controlled by tilting the tool, using only a part of the crescent to form the desired impression. Place the end of the tool in the center cut of the leaf with the open side of the crescent toward the stem and extending away at about a 45 degree angle. The tool is spaced evenly as it is moved along the leaf after each tap with the mallet. It is tilted less to form longer veins in the wider parts of the leaf.

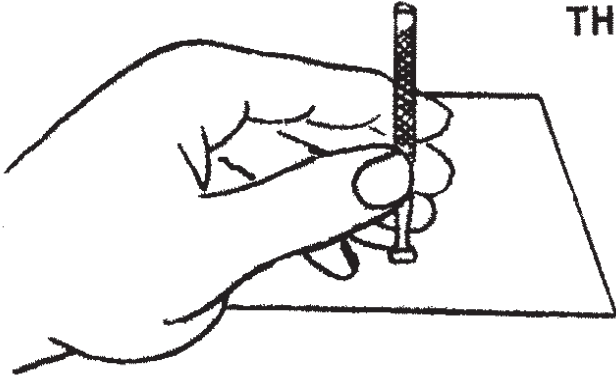


Your veiner impressions should look like this.

The impressions up and around the fern swirl are made by using only the tip end of the crescent. They should point toward a common center as the tool is tapped around the swirl. The tip end is also used to stop dead-end cuts.

Hold the veiner flat to form the folds in flower petals. The impressions are spaced evenly and gradually decreased in depth as they radiate from the seed pod.

## THE BEVELER



### Description

The working end of the beveler is almost flat, with the surface slightly rounded and slanted. A medium size with a smooth surface is usually the best with which to start.

### Purpose

The beveler is used to knock down one side of each swivel knife cut, giving a three-dimensional effect to the design. The less prominent parts of the design are knocked down to make them appear to be further in the background.

### How to Use

The side of the little finger rests on the leather to steady the tool and keep the leather from sliding. The high edge of the beveler is held in the swivel knife cut and moved about one-fourth the distance of its width as it rebounds slightly after each tap with the mallet. Hold the face of the beveler straight with the cut and against the side left standing. The leather is turned in such a manner as to leave the high side of the beveler facing the body.

Lay the side of the little finger in place on the table. Then place the high edge of the beveler in the cut about one inch in front of the little finger. Move the beveler slowly toward the little finger after each tap with the mallet. Repeat this until the cut has been beveled along its entire length.

A bumpy appearance to the beveled area is an indication that the beveler has been moved too far after each tap with the mallet, or it has not been held straight. Rough places in the beveling may be smoothed down somewhat by going over it.

Determine which part of the design should lie on top, then bevel down around it. Generally the flowers, the main stems, and the more prominent leaves are left standing.



## THE MULE'S FOOT

### Description

The mule's foot is V shaped.

### Purpose

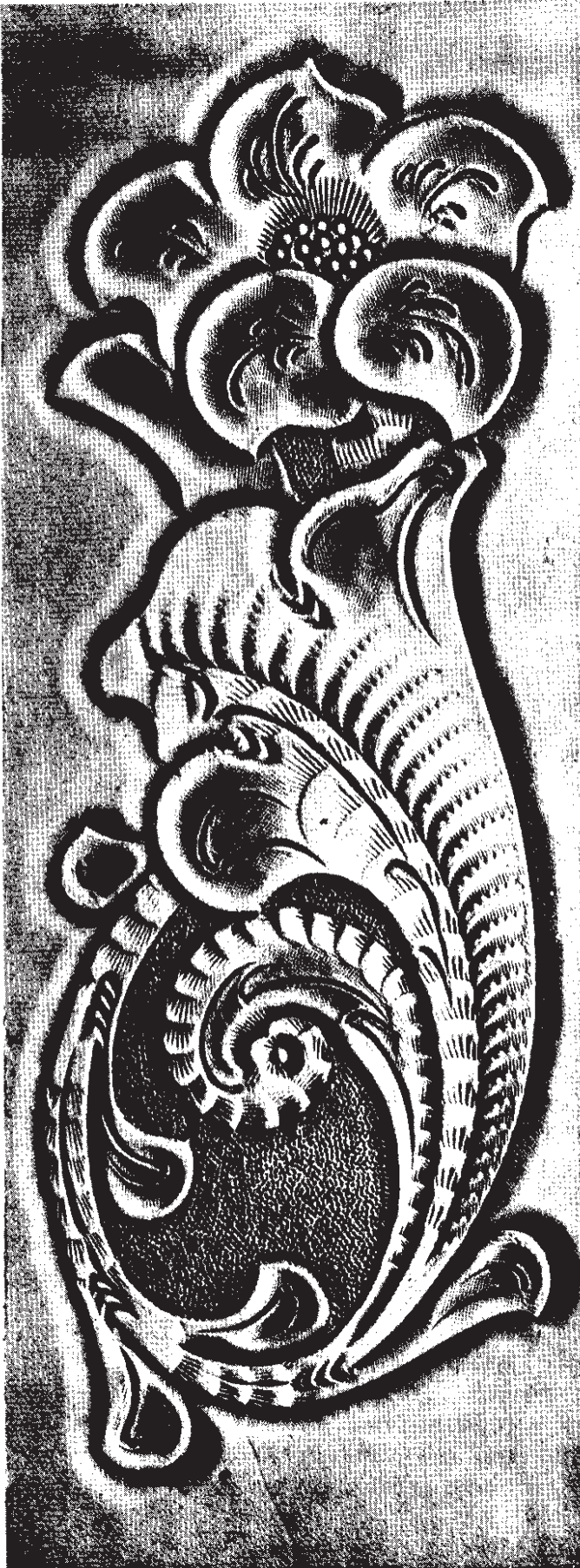
It is used under dead-end cuts and to decorate stems.

### How to Use

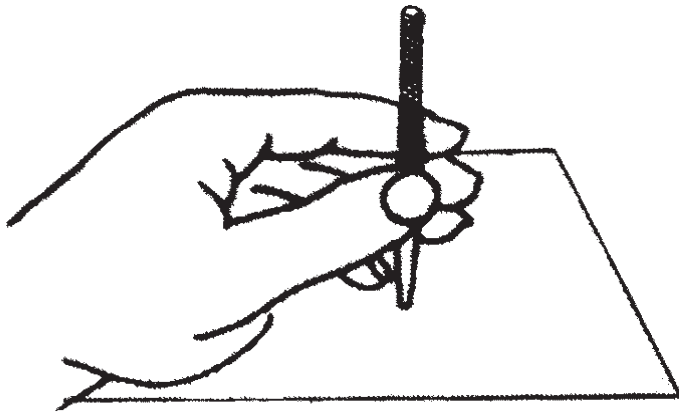
Like the seeder, the moisture content of the leather should be low.

For decorating stems, start at the top, tilting the tool toward the flower with the point of the V downward. Strike the tool firmly and decrease the depth of the impressions as it is worked down the stem.

For ending dead-end cuts, one or more impressions are tapped in just below the end of the cut with the point of the V downward.



Billfold design—illustrating use of mule's foot, seeder and other stamping tools.



## THE SEEDER

### Description

The end of the seed tool has a concave surface which leaves a dome-shaped impression in the leather.

### Purpose

The seeder is used to fill in the seed pods of flowers, at the junction of flower and stem, and in the center of fern swirls.

### How to Use

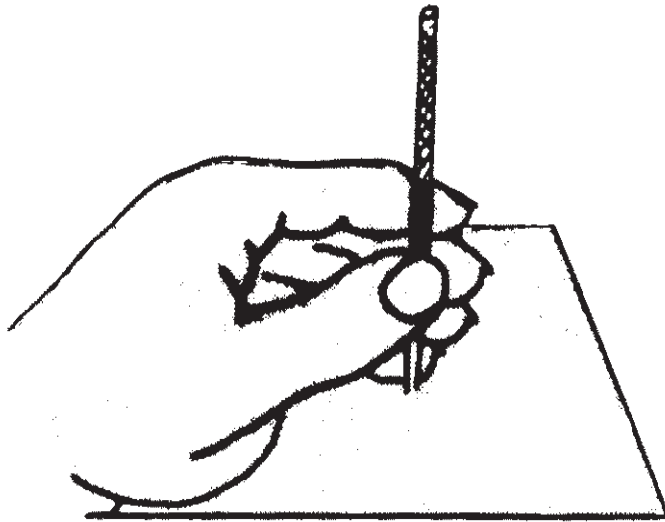
The leather being worked should not be very damp. Use a beveler or large camouflage to stamp the leather down around the top of the seed pod. Tilt the seeder slightly toward the top of the flower to give the seed pod a rounding appearance. Then tap in the first row of seeds. Hit the tool just hard enough to force the leather up in the concave surface, leaving a rounded top to each seed. If the seeds are flat on top, the tool is not being hit hard enough. The seeds should barely touch at the edges but not overlap. Hold the seeder straight to fill in the remainder of the seed pod.

The seed tools used in the center of fern swirls and at the junction of flowers and stems are usually much larger than those used to fill in the seed pod and will require a harder lick with the mallet. The larger tools will also have a tendency to bounce and leave a double impression. The bouncing may be prevented by holding the tool low and pressing it down. Tap the tool lightly with the first lick, then follow up with one or two heavier blows with the mallet.

Small seed tools are sometimes used as background tools. They are used on large belts and other designs adaptable to a coarse background.



Belt design, showing use of seeder.



## THE BACKGROUND

### Description

The background tool comes in various sizes, and the one to use depends on how big a space there is to cover and on how small a corner you need to get into.

### Purpose

It is used to tap down the area around your leaves, flowers, and swirls so they will stand out.

### How to Use

The tool is held straight up and down with the side of the little finger resting on the leather and the other three fingers stacked on top to make a spring action, causing the tool to rebound after each tap with the mallet. Move the background tool evenly and tap with a uniform lick of the mallet to obtain a smooth background of uniform depth.

Work the background areas systematically, completing each area before moving to the next.

The working end of most background tools is small; the moisture content of the leather should therefore be very low.



## ORNAMENTAL CUTS

The ornamental cuts are made free hand with the swivel knife and follow the general contour of the leaves, petals, and stems.

It is hard to make your ornamental cuts smooth, so practice quite awhile on some scrap leather.

If the leather seems too dry, add more moisture with a sponge and allow the surface moisture to evaporate. (Be sure to go over the entire surface with your sponge so it will not leave water marks.)

Turn the knife in the fingers so the blade is almost parallel to the body, then force the blade deep into the leather, turning the knife sharply as it is pulled toward the body. The pressure on the knife is gradually decreased as the blade approaches the end of the cut.

Practice until you can coordinate the cutting, turning, and releasing of pressure into one movement.



Billfold design showing ornamental cuts and stamping tool impressions.

## LEATHER FINISH

Leather will look better and wear better if it has a coating of some kind put on it. Any finish is best when put on after your carving and stamping are done and before lacing or setting snaps, to keep from getting the leather dirty or smudgy from too much handling.

A weak solution of oxalic acid (one teaspoon to one pint of water) will remove any smudges or fingermarks from the leather. Rinse with a damp sponge and let dry.

Caution: Do not wet too much or you will lose the coloring created by the stamping tools.

When using treating compound or colorless dressings, apply evenly with a circular motion. Cover the surface quickly and evenly. Let it dry and, if too light, apply the second coat.

If liquid wax or saddle soap is used to finish the leather, apply a thin coat. Thick coats turn white and fill up the cuts and tool impressions. When dry, polish to a high lustre with a soft cloth.

## LACING

Calf lacing is the best to use and will come in a variety of shades from tan to dark brown and black. Goat lacing is cheaper and there are more colors. Lacing can be purchased by the yard or by the spool and is of course cheaper to buy by the spool.

The amount of lacing required is:

Whipstitch	1 1/2 times the distance to be laced
Single Cordovan	6 to 6 1/2 times the distance to be laced
Double Cordovan	8 to 8 1/2 times the distance to be laced

The most common lacing used is 3/32 of an inch in width, although other popular widths are 1/16, 1/8, and 3/16.

### Punching the Holes

In preparation for punching the lacing holes, you will need a piece of soft wood to place under your article (which should be placed carved side down). With a pencil, mark a guide line for your punching tool 1/8 of an inch from the



edge all around where your article is to be laced. Then with a razor blade or sharp knife, cut off the corners so they are very slightly rounded.

Using a carpenter's hammer and lacing punch, make holes through the leather along the guide line. Your punch probably has four prongs. After the first series of cuts, place the first prong in the last cut and strike again. Continue this process around your article.

### Lacing Your Article

The easiest way to lace is to use a lacing needle. Work with a piece of lacing 3 to 4 feet long, with one end of your lace inserted into the needle. Lace with the carved side of the article facing you. Drawing the lacing through Bees Wax will make it pull through the leather easier, and save wear on the lacing.

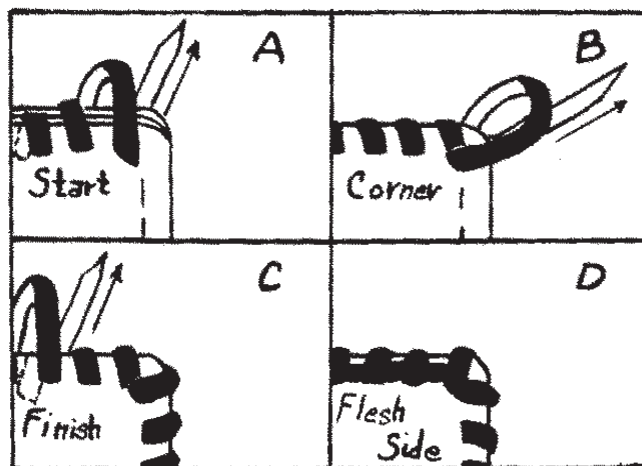
The lacing needle is pointed away from the body when inserting under loops or through holes. It is best to start somewhere along the edge of the project rather than on a corner.

In lacing around the corners or at bends (such as in a billfold) it is advisable to do double lacing through two or three holes.

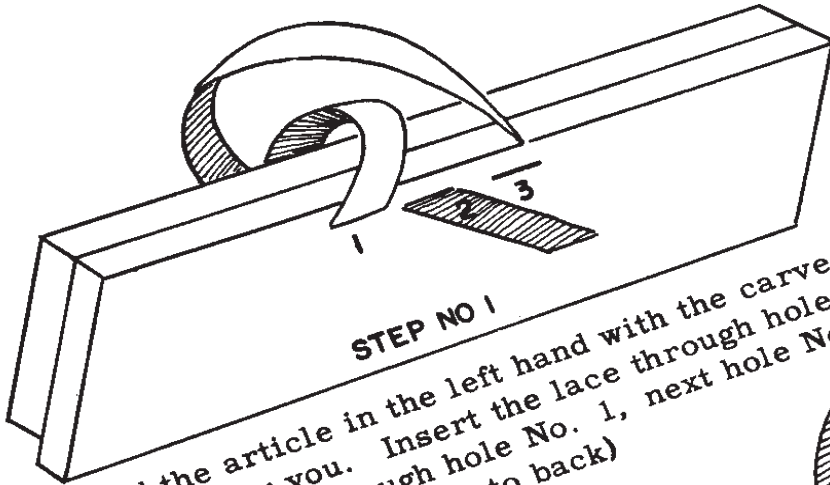
### Methods of Lacing

There are many ways to lace articles, and 3 ways are shown here: whip stitch, single Cordovan, and double Cordovan.

#### WHIP STITCH

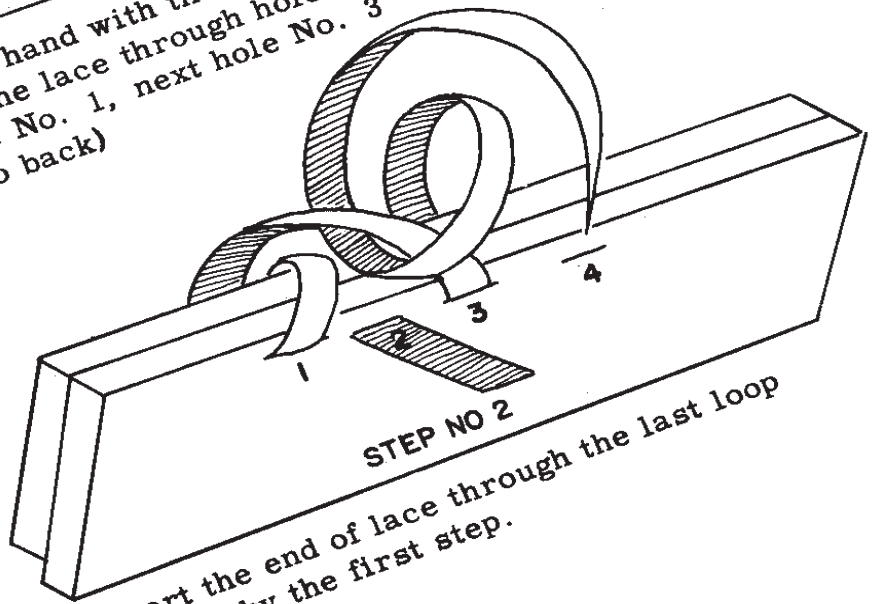


# SINGLE CORDOVAN EDGE LACING



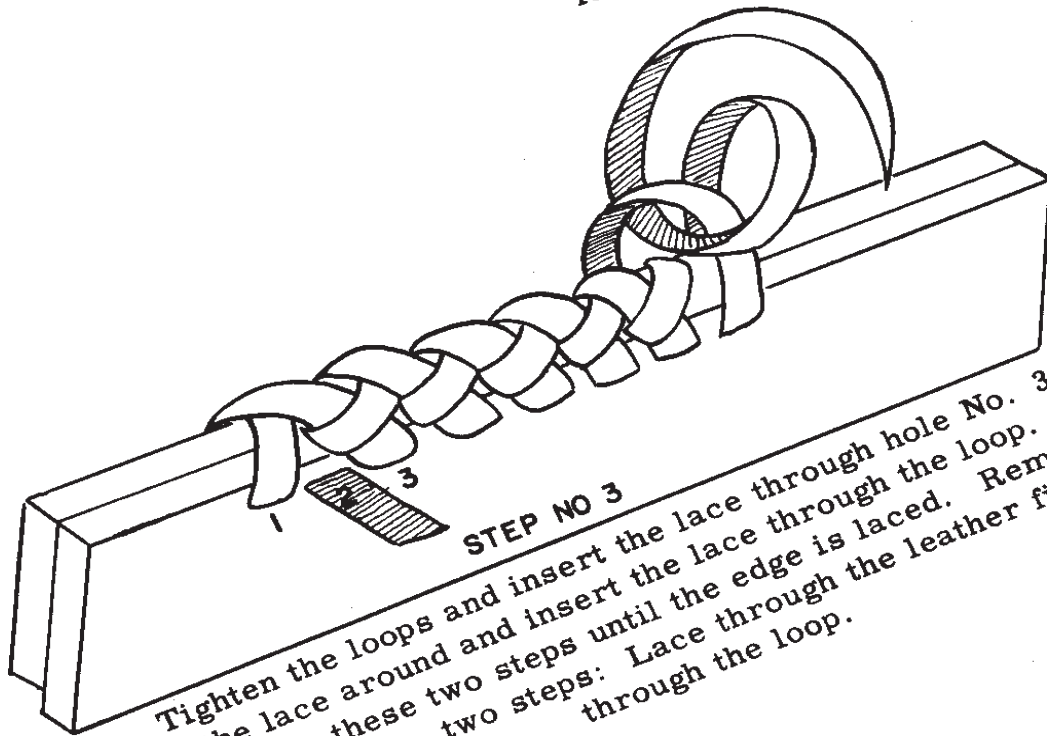
**STEP NO 1**

Hold the article in the left hand with the carved side facing you. Insert the lace through hole No. 2, then through hole No. 1, next hole No. 3 in that order. (Front to back)



**STEP NO 2**

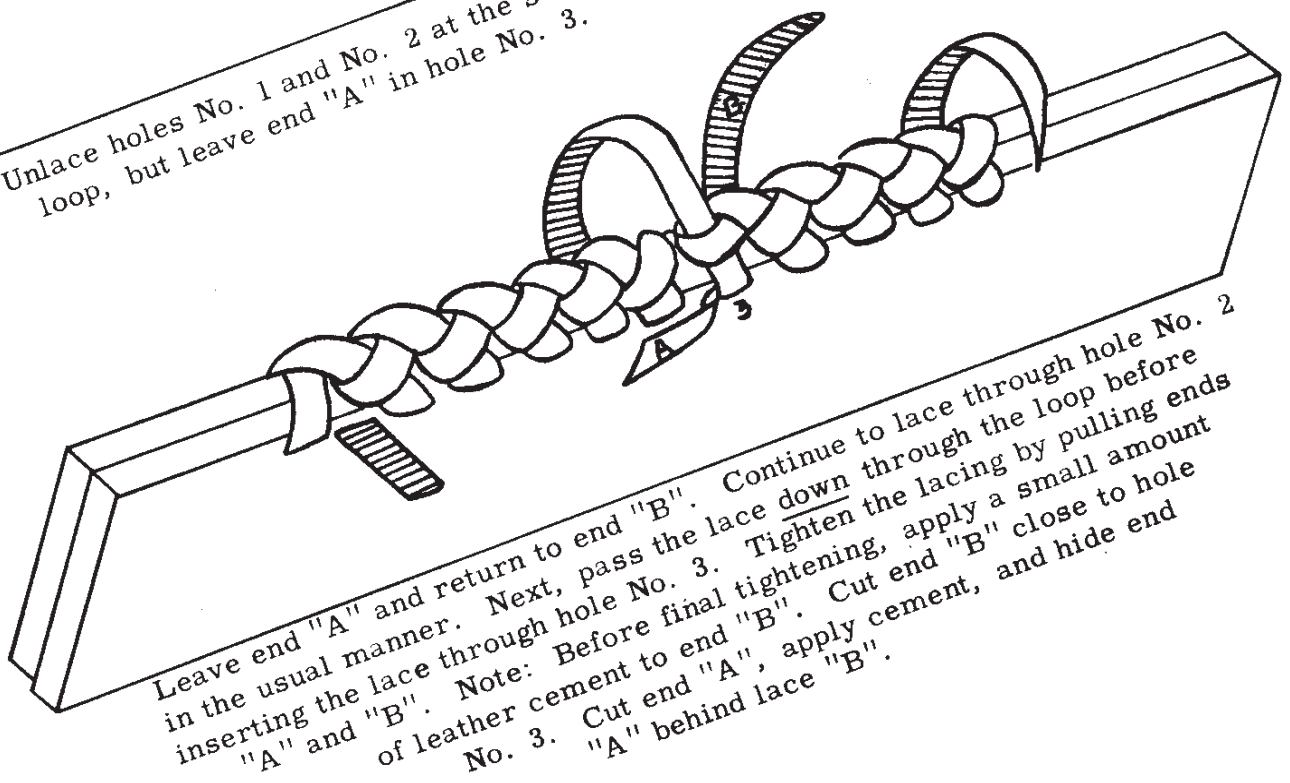
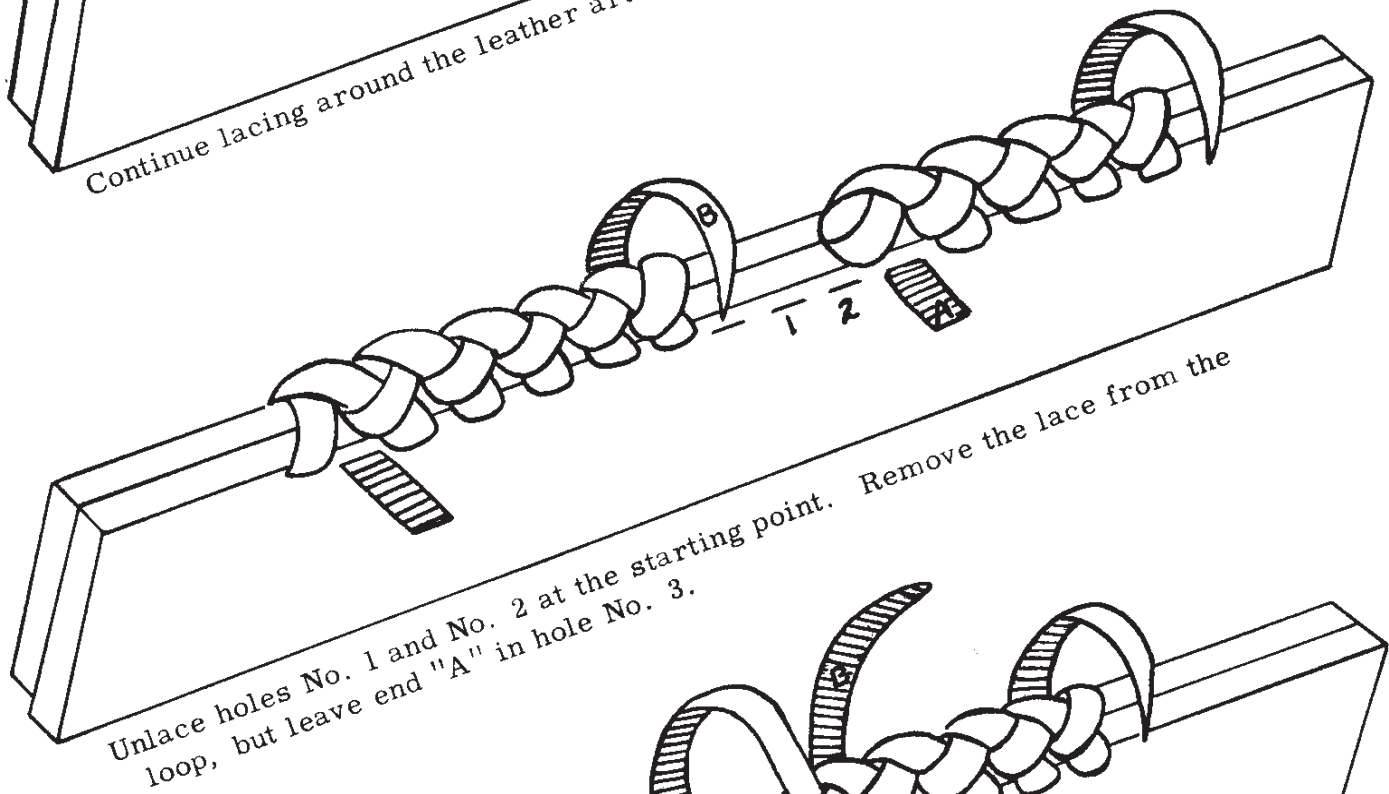
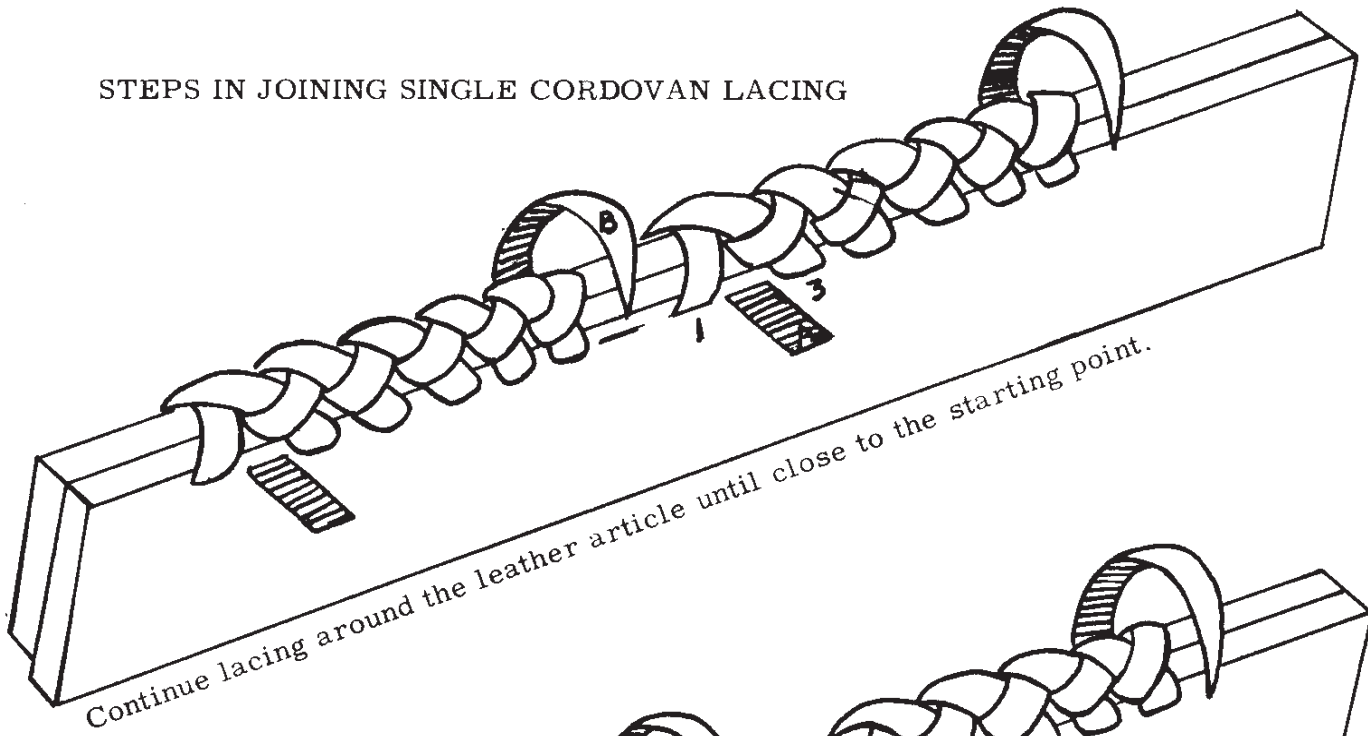
Insert the end of lace through the last loop formed by the first step.



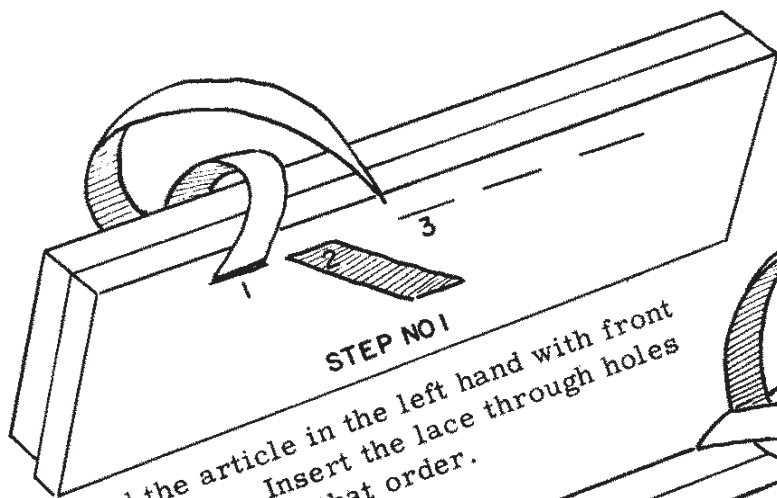
**STEP NO 3**

Tighten the loops and insert the lace through hole No. 3. Bring the lace around and insert the lace through the loop. Continue these two steps until the edge is laced. Remember the two steps: Lace through the leather first, then through the loop.

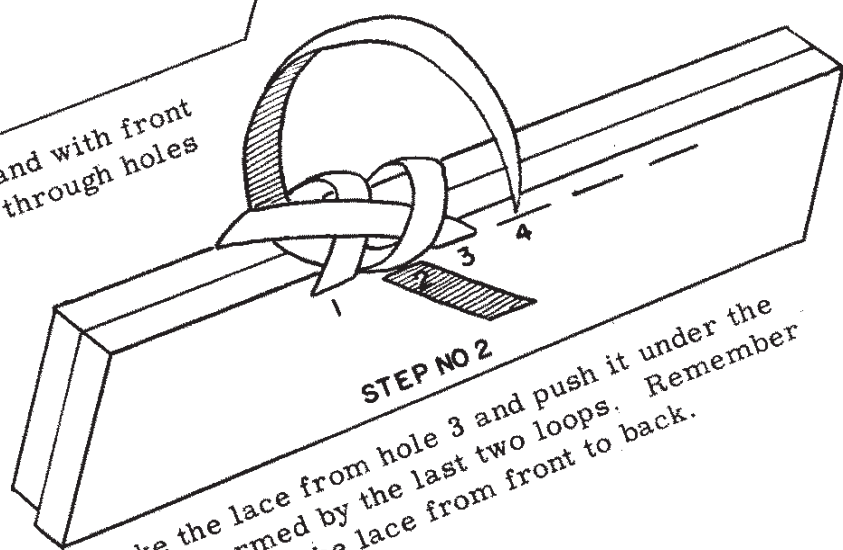
STEPS IN JOINING SINGLE CORDOVAN LACING



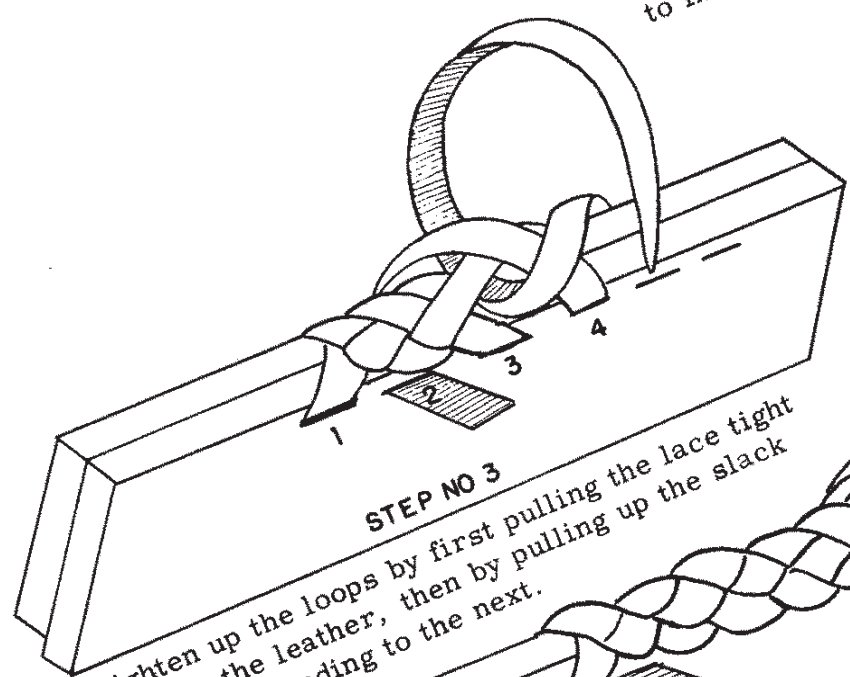
# DOUBLE CORDOVAN EDGE LACING



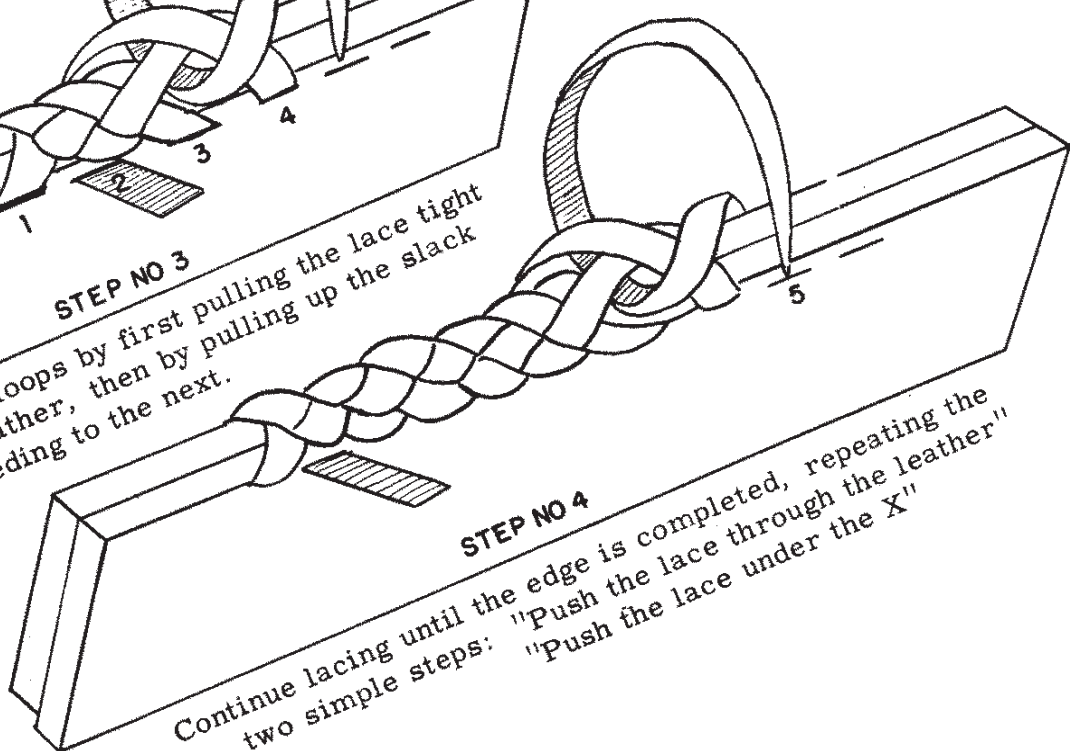
**STEP NO 1**  
 Hold the article in the left hand with front facing you. Insert the lace through holes 1, 2, and 3, in that order.



**STEP NO 2**  
 Take the lace from hole 3 and push it under the "X" formed by the last two loops. Remember to insert the lace from front to back.

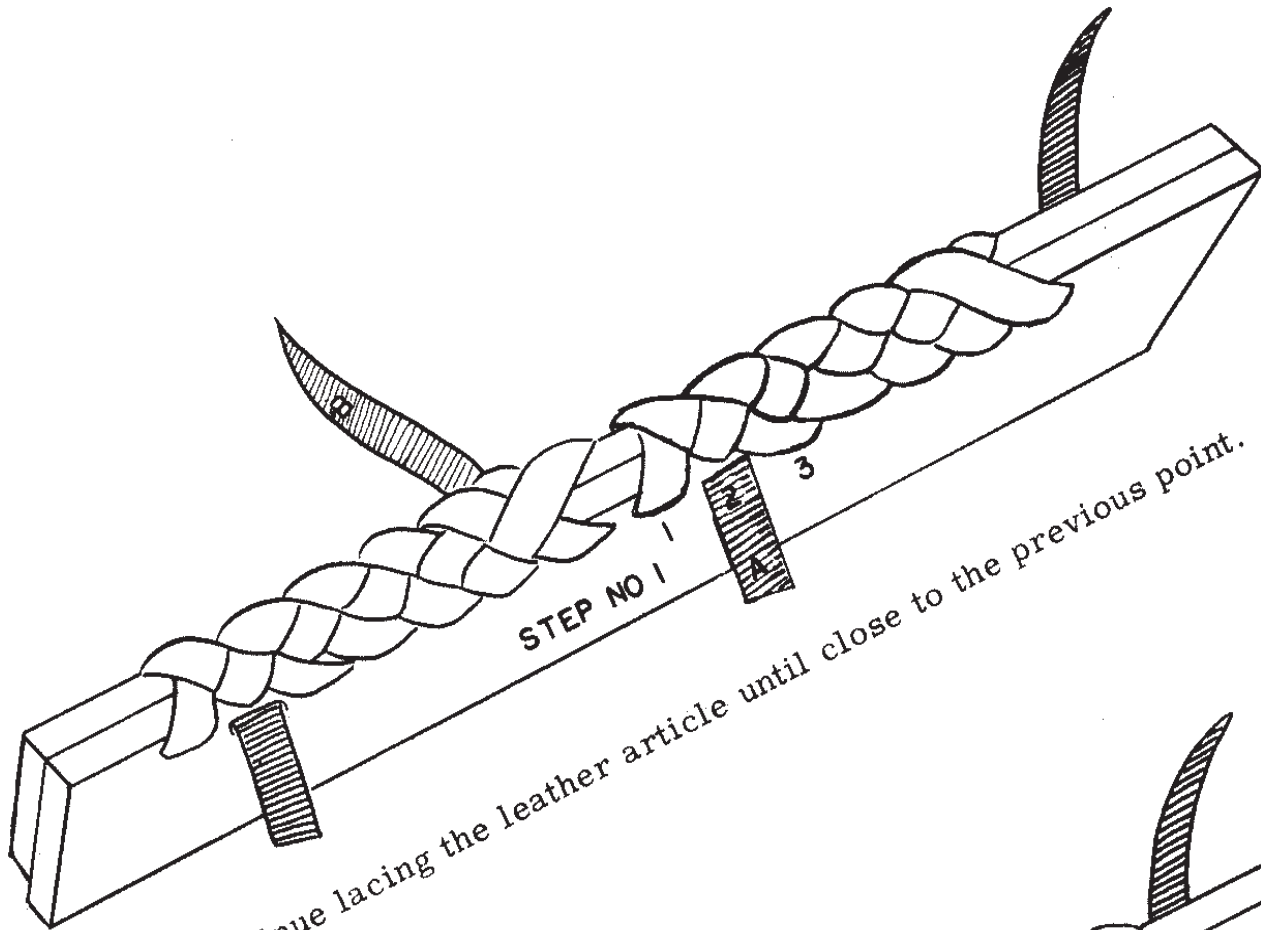


**STEP NO 3**  
 Tighten up the loops by first pulling the lace tight through the leather, then by pulling up the slack before proceeding to the next.

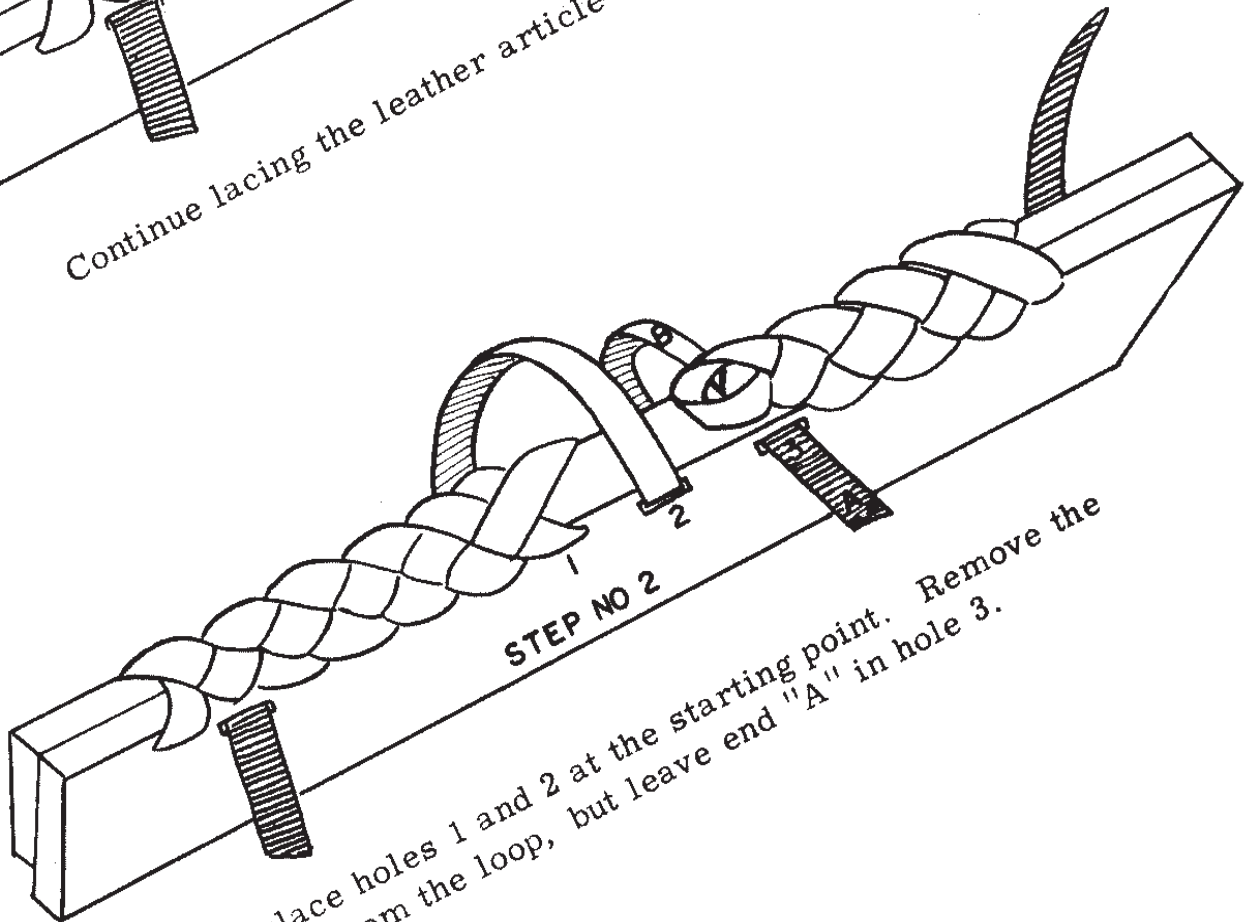


**STEP NO 4**  
 Continue lacing until the edge is completed, repeating the two simple steps: "push the lace through the leather" "push the lace under the X"

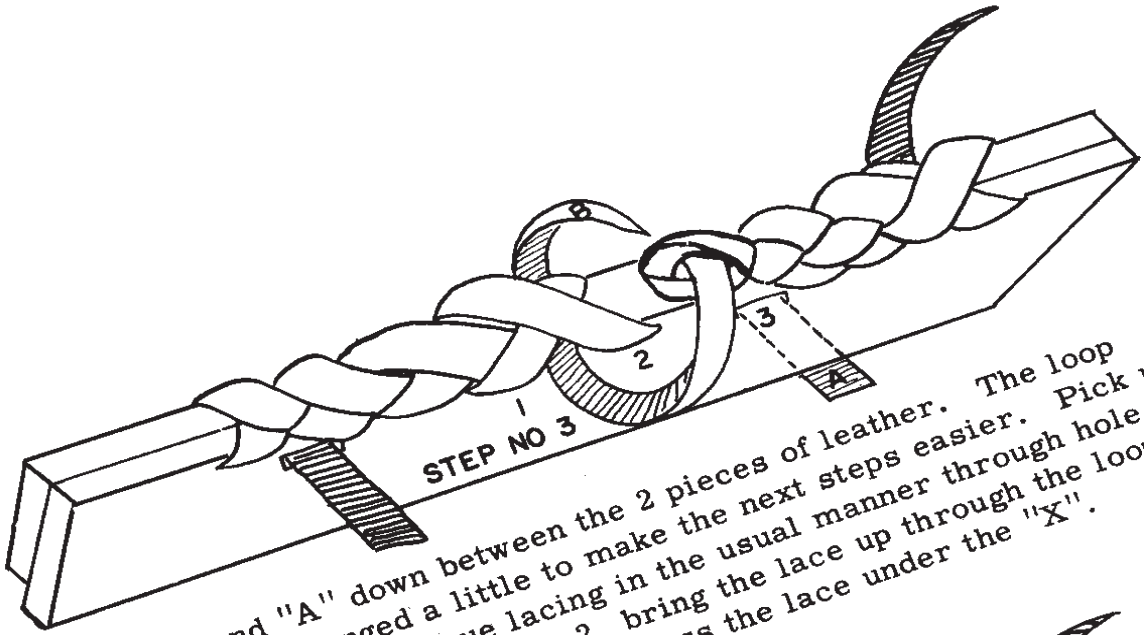
# STEPS IN JOINING DOUBLE CORDOVAN EDGE LACING



STEP NO 1  
Continue lacing the leather article until close to the previous point.

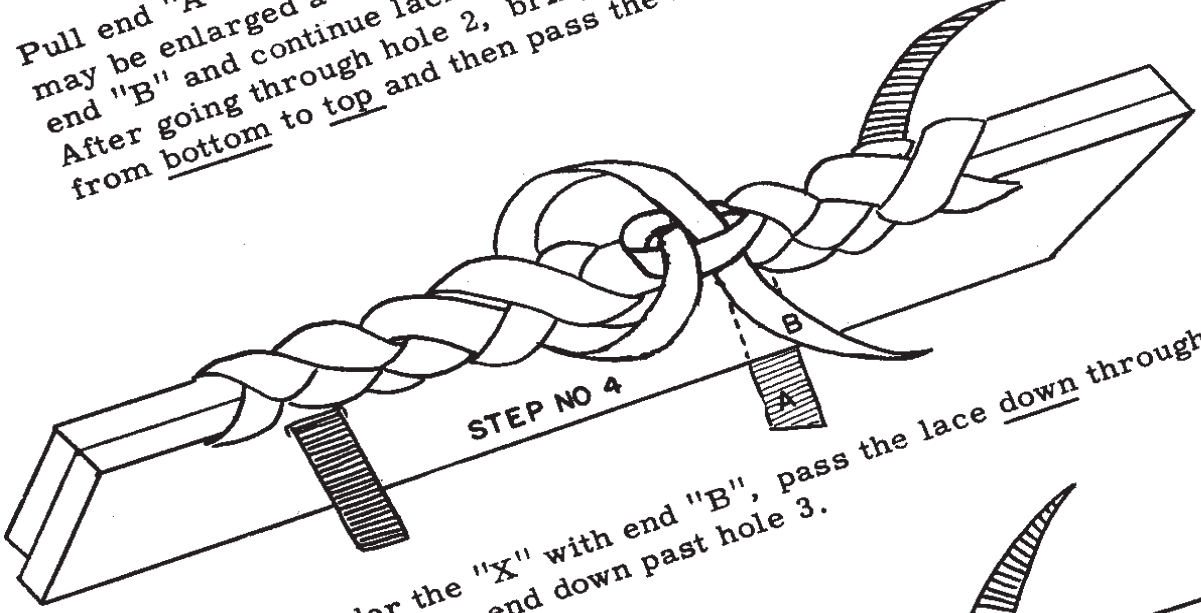


STEP NO 2  
Unlace holes 1 and 2 at the starting point. Remove the lace from the loop, but leave end "A" in hole 3.



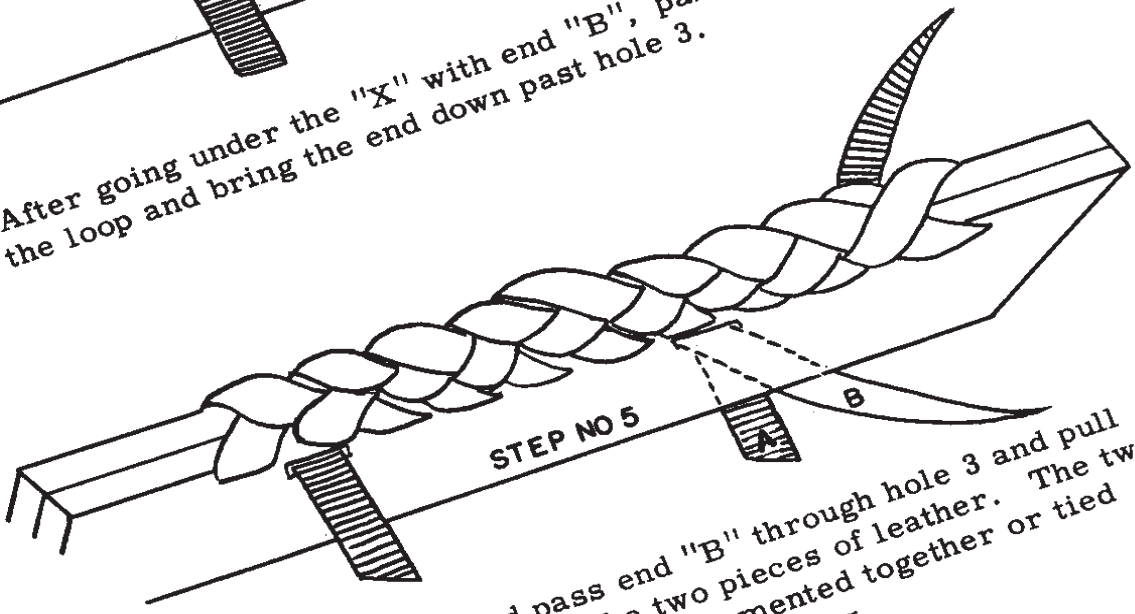
STEP NO 3

Pull end "A" down between the 2 pieces of leather. The loop may be enlarged a little to make the next steps easier. Pick up end "B" and continue lacing in the usual manner through hole 2. After going through hole 2, bring the lace up through the loops from bottom to top and then pass the lace under the "X".



STEP NO 4

After going under the "X" with end "B", pass the lace down through the loop and bring the end down past hole 3.



STEP NO 5

Tighten the loops and pass end "B" through hole 3 and pull the slack down between the two pieces of leather. The two ends "A" and "B" may be cemented together or tied into a knot to prevent unlacing.