

The Sustainable Method of Primitive Fire and Charred Materials

When using primitive methods to make fire; Flint & Steel, Fero rod, Parabolic reflector lens or a Fire bow, one may use Charred plant materials to get your fire going more quickly.

For years, I have taught dozens of Primitive Fire Workshops, using charred cotton cloth; however in a survival or wilderness situation, cloth is too valuable to burn, thus we use the Sustainable charring method.

Keith Burgess, a Colonial Living History Instructor, taught me the **Sustainable method of Charring**, which eliminates wasting valuable cloth and instead uses ubiquitous plant materials.

Locally, I use **punk wood** from Aspen, Cottonwood or Pine trees and the **outer bark** of Juniper trees or Sage brush. When a tree dies, the inner wood decays and becomes punky, the wood feels like balsa wood, it is light and spongy; in fact during a rain storm the puck wood soaks up moisture and one may wring the water out of the wood, dry the punk wood and then char it.



To char, one needs a metal tin with a lid. Remove the lid and place a combination of puck wood and Juniper bark into the tin. Use a fero rod, lighter or match to initially light the Juniper bark and char the outer skin of the punk wood. Blow the punk wood and bark into a flame, when you see the punk wood is sufficiently charred, replace the lid and the punk wood is ready for your next fire.

To use the charred material, remove the lid and throw a shower of sparks into the tin with your fero rod or flint and steel. Select one or more pieces of the glowing plant material and place them into your “bird’s nest” of Juniper bark. Fold the bird’s nest like a taco and blow the ember into a flame.

The bird’s nest (tender bundle) is created by removing 2-3 handfuls of outer Juniper bark or inner Cottonwood bark and rubbing the bark in your hands so that the bark becomes fine strands.

Once the bird’s nest is on fire, place it under your prepared Kindling pile and then tend the fire as you normally would.

Before closing the lid on your char tin, add more punk wood and Juniper bark and blow to char the new materials. Shut the lid and the plant material is again ready for your next fire.



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