

technique it's appropriate for."

The guild will lead its members through those inspired techniques and on expeditions to find weaving materials, according to Hoyt and Zimmerman - but the word "natural" in reference to the fibers the guild will use may be misleading.

The artists will incorporate everything from dandelion stems to Spanish moss into their baskets, but Hoyt and Zimmerman pointed out that some of the more domesticated plants, such as amaryllis, corn plant leaves and philodendron sheaths, might also make an appearance.

Hoyt and Zimmerman showed off some of their baskets Thursday at the Washington Civic Center. A couple of their pieces had an ancient look. For instance, Zimmerman held up a fairly large basket with plenty of sizable gaps in its woven structure.

The basket was designed to carry potatoes and onions, she explained.

Hoyt held up a smaller, decorative basket whose grassy, outside shoots appear to spray out like a spinning-wheel firecracker.

According to Zimmerman, such nonfunctional baskets are relatively recent developments. The first baskets were made thousands of years ago by hunters and gatherers to transport food, she said.

"It was a matter of making

whatever you needed out of what you had," she said.

Both artists have developed more than a passing acquaintance with baskets and the outdoors. A press release from the Beaufort County Arts Council says Hoyt is "An award-winning gourd artist and former landscape designer" who once taught at the annual convention of the North Carolina Basketmakers' Association.

"Zimmerman was designated (the) Beaufort County Arts Council's 'Best Beaufort County Artist' in 2003, and has worked with fiber in various applications, including basketry and fabric surface design, over the past 10 years," the press release says.

Wanda Johnson, executive director of the Arts Council, said the Arts Council will provide administrative support to the Natural Fibers Group, as it has for various other arts group, including the Beaufort County Choral Society, the Washington Community Theatre Association and the Pamlico Writers Group.

"Obviously, the Beaufort County Arts Council loves to see new art groups forming," Johnson said. "It just shows broad support for the arts and a strong need for guilds in different areas of the arts."

*For more information, call Hoyt at 322-4646.*