

# MAKING A SWEDISH FIRE TORCH

We've all seen them on sale in garden centres: 'Swedish fire logs' for a fiver. **DAVID ALTY** explains how to make one.



**T**radition has it that the Swedish fire torch was invented in the Thirty Years War (1618–48), when soldiers roamed across Europe foraging for food and shelter. It enabled them to have a camp fire using only one log and was unaffected by wet ground or snow.

They are a great way to provide a self-contained fire for cooking, light, warmth or simply revelling in the primeval pleasure of a living flame. Making one is simplicity itself.

**1.** Take a well seasoned log. Size is not especially important but around 30 cm tall and 12 cm across is a good starting point.

**2.** Using a chainsaw, make at least two cuts crosswise, down the length of the log, stopping about 7 cm from the bottom. The wider the log, the more cuts you will need. If you don't have a chainsaw the log can be split with an axe into four sections and loosely wired back together to give the same structure.

**3.** Place the log on a firm and level surface, ensuring a good safety zone is around it.

**4.** Push some flammable material into the top of the cuts, such as shredded birch bark. Build a small fire on the top of the log using small sticks. Keep feeding the fire until the top of the log has caught and the flames have started to spread down the cuts.

Light the log well before dark as they can take a while to get going. If you want to use the fire torch for cooking, it is best to get on with it while there is still a good solid base for your pot. Then sit back and enjoy the simplest of pleasures, an open fire, out in the open.

