



# MAKING A POT-HANGER

**Craig Fordham** of Black Wolf Survival & Bushcraft demonstrates how to make an adjustable pot-hanger set for cooking and boiling water over a small open fire.

What better way is there to enjoy your time in the woods then to be able to make yourself a hot drink on an open fire? Unlike the basic hang-a-billy-on-a-stick method, a notched pot-hanger allows you to suspend pots at different heights over the fire. It's more adaptable and versatile and will make cooking or boiling water more efficient.

## Tools

The tools needed for this are absolutely basic: a saw and a knife. A Bahco Laplander folding saw is a favoured tool among many outdoor enthusiasts as it's practical, affordable and cuts well. You will also need a knife. A fixed blade knife is preferable for jobs like this, as it involves some heavier use and battoning (hammering); folding knives may fold up and break. Above all, make sure that it is sharp!

## Materials

Choose whatever is to hand in the woodland. Green wood is easier to carve and won't burn as easily. I have used hazel.

### You will need:

- One long straight pole, roughly thumb-thick and 60–90 cm long.
- One Y-shaped piece, thumb-thick, about 1 metre long.
- A couple of '7-sticks' (in other words a bit of branch with an off-shoot that can be cut to use as a hook). One needs to be thumb-thick and about 20 cm long; the other is roughly twice as thick and about 50 cm long.
- A flat stump or cutting block log.
- A wrist-thick piece of wood around 30 cm long for use as a baton.



**1** Cut and trim the pieces to length using the saw. This does not have to be precise, but stick to the lengths noted above.

**2** Use the knife to round or 'crown' the top edges of the smaller 7-stick, which helps stop the top fraying open when you hit it with a mallet or baton to put it into the ground. Note how I'm using my thumb on my other hand to push the back of the blade to help make controlled little cuts.

**3** Use the knife to cut away the other end of the 7-stick into a spike sharp enough to poke into the ground. Don't make it too sharp, as it might break.



**4** Next, take the longer 7-stick to make the pot hanger itself. Clean it up and cut it to length if necessary. To make the hanging sections for the pot, notch three separate 'beak' cuts into the large 7-stick at different heights. The cuts need to be made on the 'front' – the same side as the hook of the '7'. Lay the piece on the chopping block and then lay the knife blade against it diagonally across the width.

**5** With the knife in your weaker hand to make battoning (hitting the back of the knife) easier, hold the baton in your stronger hand and use it to hit the back edge of the knife, driving the blade a good few millimetres down into the wood.







**6** To free the blade, simply lift slightly and hit down on the stick. For the second cut, simply make a line through the first cut from the other direction forming a large X-shape and baton it in the same way. The result will be an even X-shape.

Repeat this whole process in two other points along the shaft of the 7-stick to give three separate and evenly spaced X-shaped cuts.

**7** To create the beak cuts, use the knife to cut away the wood around the X-shape leaving just a triangle that points down towards the hook end. Take a bit of time over this – the beak cut needs to be notched enough to mate with a supporting stick. Repeat this process on the other two X marks so you end up with three beak cuts.



The finished beak cuts pointing down towards the hanger. Note the slight lip at the point of each cut.



**CRAIG FORDHAM** runs **Black Wolf Survival & Bushcraft** near Ashford in Kent. He is a specialist in survival and bushcraft, an organisational member of the Institute of Outdoor Learning and an approved archery instructor. Based in a beautiful woodland site, he teaches all over the UK and runs international guided trips and expeditions.



**8** Next, take the long, straight pole and thin down about 5 cm of one end evenly with your knife.



**9** Using the very tip of your knife, make a small divot in the end to help the beak of the large 7-stick sit evenly.



### Assembling the pot-hanger system

**10** Choose a fire site and drive the Y-shaped stick into the ground.



**11** Slide the straight pole along the Y until you're happy with the length and the height. Then, drive the small, sharpened 7-stick into the ground at the end of the straight pole to hold it in place.



**12** Set up the fire site at the other end of the stick. Take the large 7-stick and hang it from the end of the straight stick, making sure the divot sits well within the beak cut on the end of the stick. See how well it hangs and make any adjustments as necessary. It may well hang better with a cooking pot on it as the weight of the pot helps it balance.



**13** Once it all seems secure, light the fire, fill the pot with water and enjoy a cup of tea. As the fire dies down, it is easy to adjust the height of the pot by moving the straight hanger stick to a different beak-cut on the 7-stick.

