

## **Robin and Mary Reed**

*“We have worked with natural materials that are available to us in our surroundings, in our environment here in the woods, . . . our inspiration comes from the beauty of the nature around us.”*

Robin and Mary Reed left the hustle and bustle of their hometown of Lexington, Kentucky, in the 1970's to settle on a homestead in the Daniel Boone National Forest in rural Estill County. They both have degrees from the University of Kentucky, Mary in fine arts and Robin in architecture, but when they moved “back to the land,” they turned to their newly adopted community to learn heritage and survival skills like farming with horses, heating with wood, and making natural crafts. Their first crafts venture was candle-making, but by the early 1980's, the popularity of handmade candles had peaked and declined, so they considered the materials available on their homestead. Robin began fashioning baskets from the bark of tulip poplar and willow trees that grow along the banks of Ross Creek, which runs by their studio. The baskets are both functional and decorative and look particularly stunning when holding a colorful arrangement of corn shuck flowers created by Mary. Mary has researched the Native American and Early American traditions of corn shuck arts and learned from corn shuck artists how to use the outer shucks of corn to create flowers, corn shuck dolls, angels, and nativity sets. For 35 years they have produced beautiful handmade crafts and taught crafts workshops. They have always taken an earth-friendly approach to life, and they raise organic mushrooms and are active in food cooperatives in both Lexington and Irvine. They have held leadership roles in crafts organizations like the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen and the Kentucky Appalachian Artisan Center. Mary also serves as peer mentor in the Kentucky Peer Advisory Network.