



Arizona Gourds

June updates from the desert southwest...

Welcome to the June issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!

This issue marks the one year anniversary of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!

Thanks to all of you for taking the time to visit each month. I hope to continue offering a monthly newsletter as long as I can come up with something new to contribute each month. The newsletter is my way of paying something back to the gourd world for all the help I received when I was first starting out, and to thank all the great gourd friends I've made over the years.

I also want to thank those of you that support my site by purchasing supplies, tools and other gourd crafting items. Your support makes it possible to continue adding new FREE tutorials and other information of interest to the gourd world.



Making the trip to the Welburn Gourd Festival?

The Welburn Gourd Festival will be held on June 25-26, in Fallbrook, California. I will be away for a week to teach classes and attend the festival. Orders that are placed from June 19-26 will be shipped on the 27th when I return. I will not have a booth at the festival this year, but will be teaching classes on Wednesday through Saturday at the festival grounds. I will have some tools, supplies, and some autographed books available for purchase, so stop by if you want to pick up some items and save on shipping. You may want to send me an email list if you have specific requests, as I won't be bringing all my stock.

What's new on the [Arizona Gourds](#) website?

Introducing Tackee Wax

Tackee wax is a specially formulated mixture of beeswax and pine pitch that is the perfect base for beading on gourds and other hard surfaces. Unlike plain beeswax, this wax will not harden, shrink, or reject beads over time. Read more about the use of this product in the tips section below, and order a block from our [Kits and Displays page](#).



I've added a large supply of new **Dichroic Glass Cabochons** to the [Inlay Supplies Page](#). Please take a look while the selection is the best.



Join The Class updates List

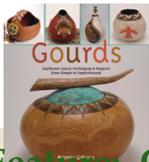
E-MAIL ME

Update: Gourd Classes

New classes are now posted on my [Classes](#) page. There are a few summer classes and some fall sessions to choose from. Some classes fill quickly, hope to see YOU there!

*(*Note: Several classes have already been filled by people that got advanced notification from my class updates list. More classes will be added if there is enough interest - send me an email if you have a request for classes or dates. Be sure to join the class updates list if you want to be among the first to receive information about new and upcoming classes!)*

I'd also enjoy hearing from you if you have request for a new class you'd like to see offered.



from Simple to Sophisticated by Bonnie Gibson

All books I ship are autographed.

(Please click on the book cover for ordering information.)

June Feature: Copper Canyon, Gourds and other crafts of Mexico

My husband and I took a vacation trip last month to Mexico and enjoyed short visits to several different areas. One of the reasons we took this particular trip, and a definite highlight along the way was taking a train ride to see Copper Canyon, ("Barranca del Cobre") Mexico's own version of our Grand Canyon. Due to time constraints, we only stayed at the canyon for a very short visit, but the train ride was a wonderful adventure and we got to see a wide variety of topography from sea level to over 7000 feet.

One of the things I enjoyed most was seeing the local cultures and crafts, and I always had my eye out for gourds! *(We saw tons of small wild gourd vines in the semi-arid areas near the beginning of our train ride. These grew up into the trees, and the gourds looked like a profusion of Christmas ornaments.)*

The Tarahumara Indians live in the Copper Canyon area, and while they use do gourds for rattles, their main crafts are basketry made from the local yucca and pine needles, and small wooden drums and violins.



The train ride was fun; we crossed many high bridges and went through over 80 tunnels each way! The landscape varied from desert to ponderosa pine forests.



Some Tarahumara women selling their basket crafts on the steps of the Hotel Posada Mirador at the Canyon edge. The women marry at an average age of about 12 and the life span is only 45. Their staple diet consists of corn and beans. They never smile for photographs; smiles are a gift reserved for family members or close friends.



Canyon Overlook. To really experience the canyon you need to spend more time than our trip allowed. Copper Canyon is not as developed as our Grand Canyon, so hiking is the best way to really appreciate much of the area.

Right: A Tarahumara man wears an elaborate set of butterfly cocoon rattles on his ankles.



Typical Tarahumara baskets and one of the weavers at work.

Right: Women and children run to the train to sell their wares.



A Tarahumara Gourd Rattle. I loved the handcarved handle. *(I'm not so sure about the painting, though!)*

We also traveled to other



cities in Mexico.

Left: This young girl was dancing in a folkloric show in a small town on the Baja Peninsula.

Right: Colorful Ceramics of all types were available everywhere!

Want to see more pictures from our travels to Mexico? Visit my husband [Eo's photos](#) at Webshots. He has tons of interesting photo albums.



These fanciful wooden figures are called "Alebrijes" by the Zapotec Indians of Oaxaca (pronounced *wah-HAH-ka*.) This Mexican state is located on the far southern Pacific side of Mexico and is famous for inexpensive colorful arts and crafts - you can find carved wood, pottery, dolls and textiles.



The Huichol (Pronounced *WEE-chol*) Indians of West-Central Mexico produce fabulous bead work and yarn paintings. These are two gourd pieces that I purchased in the town of Puerto Vallarta. The piece on the right has a lid that separates between the rows of black beads. The beads are set into a mixture of beeswax and pine pitch.

Tip of the Month: Making your own Huichol-Style Gourds

Use a prepared wax such as TackeeWax or Beadswax as a base for your beaded gourd. Pure beeswax will harden over time and will eject the beads, so it is important to use the specially prepared waxes. The beads can be of any size, but for beginners a size 10 or 11 is small enough. If you want a really delicate design you can use a size 14 but you really need to have patience and good eyes for those smaller size beads!

Some people like to melt the wax in a small dish using a small electric hot plate and then paint the wax onto the surface. I find it easier simply soften the wax in my hands, kneading it until it becomes warm and soft. Break off small bits of wax and smooch it onto the gourd surface. You'll need to really squish it on there and manipulate the wax to get an even coat of wax on the area you want to cover. The wax should only be about 1/2 as deep as the beads you'll be using, you don't want excessive wax to distract from the beads.

You can use any design you want for your gourd, but I suggest you look at some examples of finished pieces for ideas. You can create geometric - mosaic style designs such as the Huichol Indians use, or you can create a mural-like scene. What you do depends on your skill level, imagination, and colors of beads that you have on hand. For best results, use the same size beads throughout the project. If you look at the examples above and below, you'll notice that the traditional Huichol patterns are repetitive and radiate out from central circular designs. Most designs resemble 6 sided snowflake shapes.

Start in the very center of your bowl and work outwards. If you are beading around a full gourd, draw lines on the gourd for the basic patterns and do one section at a time. Firmly press the beads into the wax, placing them so each hole faces outwards. Additional beads should be placed closely together so very little wax shows between beads.

You may find it helpful to use a small tool to pick up and manipulate the beads. Create your own homemade tool made from a dowel for a handle and a blunt tapestry needle of the appropriate size for the beads you are using. (The correct sized needle will only allow the

bead to fit onto the tip without sliding down the needle.)
 Use a wire cutter to cut off an inch from the needle tip. Drill a small hole
 needle tip using a gap-filling super glue. Pick the beads up by placing th
 transfer the bead to the waxed surface and press into place.

**Do you have a tip or tutorial we can featu*

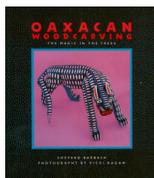


Featured Gourd of the Month: **Mountain Lion Mother and Cub**

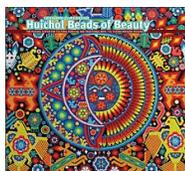
This piece was done as a commission, and was used as a demo
 piece at a recent Advanced Wildlife carving class. Two-dimensional
 photos can't always show the detail of carving especially after the
 painting is complete, so here are before and after views of this
 gourd so you can see it at different stages.



[Copper Canyon](#)



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 Magic in the Trees](#)



[Huichol Beads of
 Beauty - 2008
 Calendar](#)

you may enjoy.

The Copper Canyon book is a
 wonderful guide for anyone that is
 interested in taking the train trip.

For many more books on Mexican
 crafts including patterns, reference
 and techniques, please visit the
["Mexico"](#) book page found on my
 website.

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A note about emails:

Many of us have come to rely on email correspondence in our personal and professional lives. However, unlike traditional mail, email has a much greater tendency to become lost without anyone ever knowing it. Email can be sent and simply "disappear" into cyberspace. The worst part is - you won't know it, and neither will anybody else. There are a lot of variables that play into email transmission, including your Internet service provider, your computer anti-virus and spam software, and even your email application. Sometimes we think that as long as we

have our own junk mail filters set appropriately then everything will come and go just as we intend it. But once you send an email, it has to pass through several different portals and filters before it reaches its final destination. Not getting the newsletter? Be sure you have added messages from bonniegibson@qwest.net to your safe sender list.

If you have sent me an email and have not heard back within a few days, then the chances are I never received your correspondence. Even when traveling, I try to be very diligent with all email communication and I even scan the junk mail filters for legitimate emails that slip by. If you have tried contacting me and have not received a timely response, you may reach me at **1.520.299.3627**. Be aware that I am on Mountain Standard time (the correct Tucson time is displayed on my home page) and that I may not answer the phone if I am outside carving gourds, but I do have an answering machine.

Don't want to use the internet shopping cart? I can only accept credit cards through paypal but I'm will gladly accept your check if you prefer to place an order by email or phone.

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