



Arizona Gourds

September updates from the desert southwest...



Sept08.pdf

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<Air Carving tools are small dental handpieces that operate at extremely high speeds. Most rotary tools operate at operate on high torque (power) and low revolutions (35,000-40,000 RPM) . On the other hand, high speed air driven instruments use 1/16 inch diameter burs while ultra high speed instruments use 1/16 inch diameter dental burs. A regular rotary tool is excellent for bulk or gross reduction where detail and precision is not a consideration. For engraving or carving fine details, an air tool is ideal. Please note that these tools should not be confused with "micro-motor" type tools, which have small handpieces but are motor driven.

Welcome to the September issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!

Here in the southwest, we are eagerly anticipating the return of cooler weather. It's a lot more fun to go outside and carve gourds when the temperature drops below 100 and the humidity from our summer monsoon season goes down. Some gourd growers in Arizona have already begun harvesting some early gourds - in our hot desert climate gourds often dry quickly right on the vine. Despite the heat, I did keep my promise to myself and find time to work on a new gourd just for fun. I have featured it on the home page of my website, but you can see additional views below.

Note: I will be traveling to teach classes at the Florida Gourd Retreat in September. Because of that trip, **I will not be shipping orders from from September 15th to the 22nd.** I promise to ship out any orders promptly just as soon as I return.



Ev and I were very fortunate to spend a week in Alaska last month with our grown children, spouses and grandchildren. It was a wonderful way for all of us to spend time together in one place, and the Alaskan scenery was fabulous. I also loved seeing the Northwest Coast art. To the right is one of the totems from the National Park in Sitka. Above is a view of Glacier Bay. It is beautiful up there and we also enjoyed the cooler weather.



Update: Gourd Classes

New September 27th "UFO" (unfinished objects) gourd class - information on the [classes](#) page.

Last chance - just a couple of weeks before my classes at the Florida Gourd Retreat. There are still a few spaces available in some classes, which are September 17 to the 21st. Please visit the [Florida Gourd Society](#) page for more information and to register for classes.

My classes at the [Texas Gourd Festival](#) (October 17 - 19th) are nearly full. Please visit their site to register. Texas has a lot of great gourd artists and I think this festival will just continue to grow and become better every year. I'm looking forward to attending.

*To get notice of classes as soon as they are posted, please add your name to my classes updates email list. People on this list will get the news first and have the best opportunity to select the dates and classes they prefer.



Join The Class updates List

Gourd Trivia

This kind of creepy gourd trivia item comes from Scott Nelson: In the Neolithic age, (about 700 years ago) a primitive form of CRANIAL TREPHINATION was practiced in many parts of the world. This procedure involved the cutting and removal of portions of the skull. It is assumed that this was done for therapeutic reasons such as swelling from head injuries, and possibly for religious reasons such as allowing evil spirits to escape from the brain. These primitive surgeons sometimes used shells or gourd pieces to replace missing parts of skulls. Gourd pieces were wrapped in a thin gold sheet, and inserted in the skull under the skin or to cover the hole left by the operation.

Other interesting uses for gourds: Joanne Crouch of South Carolina has spoken to numerous garden clubs and senior groups about gourds. One night a woman told her that her grandfather was taught how to swim by using a floatation device by joining 2 gourds together with a rope. The person would have a gourd on each side to assist them in staying afloat. Charlotte Durrence of Georgia reports that someone she knows made a lidded gourd to hold dirt and worms for fishing bait, just like one their Grandfather used.

Many thanks to my gourd friends for sharing these interesting items!

Revisiting Gourd Storage Solutions: Last month, I mentioned how fishing nets make great storage for gourds. I had several readers that sent me a note to tell me that their old hammocks were serving similar duty and we getting much more use as gourd storage than they ever received for their original purpose.

I also got this storage solution from Shelley Fletcher, of Laveen, Arizona:

"Bonnie, enjoyed your newsletter & thought I'd send you my storage solution. I make lightweight containers from plastic garden fencing. I have 12-15 of these in various sizes to keep my gourds sorted by type, size, clean, dirty or whatever. I use 2' heavy plastic fencing that I found at Lowes. You can't use the taller, flimsy stuff that is used for temporary fencing because it doesn't have enough body to stand on it's own and just folds up. The rolls have 25 feet on them and I use a piece for the bottom and make a circle or square for the walls and I fasten everything together with small cable ties. I get 2 or 3 from a roll depending on how big I make them. They can be stacked and moved around easily and for my classes I just grab one with the right shapes I need and 'wagon' it over to my studio. As I use up the gourds, they can be folded down and stacked until the next trip to the gourd farm!

PS: You'll note that my gourds have to share space with all my hubby's old tractors. I have to keep my eye on him so he doesn't encroach on my gourd space.



Cindi Jeffcoat's storage solution:

"My small shed has been over-run with gourds. We found some old refrigerator racks at an abandoned property and also found some shelf brackets laying around. We mounted the racks on the walls of the shed and store the gourds up there. They get plenty of ventilation while drying and don't take up much room. We mounted some over and under each other and some end to end. These racks can store a lot of gourds! The best part is they were destined for the landfill, so were FREE and are now recycled!"

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

There has been enough interest that I will continue carrying the **needle carving drills** that are shown in the filigree tutorial instructions. This type of steel carving bur dulls more quickly than the carbide filigree burs, but they do cut quickly and produce a smooth edged cut. You can order them on the [Carving Burs](#) page. Instructions on how to use these burs is found in the [Filigree Project Packet](#).

New Orange Coral Heishi strands on the [Inlay Supplies](#) page!



Overstock Special: My supplier made a mistake and I ended up with an oversupply of [beaded dragonfly pins](#). I'm not able to return these, so I'm offering them at a special discounted price for the month of September. They are available in 6 different colors and all of them are lovely. You can order by color during September while supplies last.



This gourd has an added dragonfly pin.

August Feature: Methods for Attaching Embellishments

Lyn Brown of Green Valley, Arizona sent me this question: "I got a bunch of deer antlers and I don't know how to attach them to the gourds. Is there a special "glue" to use?" This is a great question and doesn't apply just to antlers - part of the fun of working with gourds and embellishments is figuring out the best ways of attaching parts together so they are both secure and attractive.

Simply gluing embellishments directly onto the gourd surface can be the weakest type of bond for several reasons. First, you are probably gluing two **dissimilar materials** together. Second, you are often gluing two **surfaces that are not totally flat** so there will be gaps between them. Finally, you are probably gluing together **slick, non-porous surfaces**. You'll get a far more secure bond when you correct these three problem areas.

The first concern of gluing dissimilar items is addressed by using a glue that performs well on two different surfaces. A great resource to use is www.thisisthat.com. This website has drop down boxes that allow you to select two materials that you wish to join. Gourds are closest to wood, so choose that as one option. The second option is the item you are attaching, such as glass, fabrics, metal, etc. This site will tell you the pros and cons of various adhesives. Personally, I use a limited number of adhesives. My two favorites are gap filling cyanoacrylates (You can see what I use at the bottom of the [Tools](#) page on my website) and [Weldbond](#). Weldbond looks like a thick white glue but performs more like an epoxy, providing a very strong bond. It cleans up with water and dries clear.

To make a stronger bond between two items that are not flat, such as a [glass](#) or [stone](#) cabochon, carve a small opening in the gourd, creating a flat-bottomed shallow hole into which the cabochon will fit. Glue the cabochon into this carved opening and the bond will be extremely strong. This technique was used to add the beaded dragonfly to the gourd shown above. (There are more details and photos about this technique in my ["Gourds" book](#).) This technique will also solve the problem of gluing slick, non-porous surfaces, as the carved out area will have surface roughness and porosity and will provide a good surface for adhesion. When possible, you may also want to rough up the back side of your embellishment to make a more secure bonding surface.

If you are gluing items such as African porcupine quills, thick quilled feathers, dowels, bundles of horsehair, chopsticks etc., simply drill a hole into the gourd that is just slightly smaller than the object you wish to add. Put a small amount of glue on the end of the object and push it into the hole for a snug fit. This makes a very strong bond.

Don't forget other options including stitching, lacing or using fasteners such as nails or screws.

Which brings us back to the original question about antlers. Attaching antlers depends on what you are trying to do. To put them on a mask, a very secure way is to drill a hole into the end of the antler and insert a special threaded fastener that has a pointed screw thread on one end and a threaded bolt end on the other. Next, drill a hole into the gourd where the antler is to be placed, insert the bolt, and then add washers on the inside of the gourd to spread the weight on the gourd surface before tightening on a nut to hold everything in place. If you are weaving antlers onto a gourd, no glue is necessary. The weaving should be sufficient to hold the antler in place. If an antler is used as a stand, drill small holes into the gourd and tie them together with artificial sinew. With heavy items like antlers, glue should be used as a supplement, not as the only means of attachment.

This gourd has several added embellishments. The elk teeth were stitched onto the gourd with artificial sinew. The tin cones and leather strips were added by drilling a hole into the gourd and then gluing the leather into the holes.

(Elk teeth are available on the [Beads and Embellishments page](#).
Sinew, metal cones and leather



This gourd has been attached by drilling holes in the gourd and lacing it to the antler.



Two adhesives I use.



An opening has been created so the cabochon can be glued in very securely.



All of these beads are firmly attached. I drilled small holes in the gourd and then inserted heavy pins through the beads and into the holes in the gourd. A bit of gap filling cyanoacrylate glue makes everything extra secure..



laces are available near the bottom of the [Special Embellishments](#) page.)



These added pieces have been stitched on using the same leather lace as the woven rim.

Project of the Month: Picture Files

For art or other items that inspire you, consider a stack of old publications looking for a great photo that you remember, or perhaps it was a photo of a beautiful vase or painting. After several hours, your old magazines, you still haven't found what you were looking for. My office may have to sacrifice your magazines by removing pages, but the relief from the clutter will make it worthwhile.

At my office supply store. Regular file folders are ok too, but the pocket file style works best for you - but I have mine divided into folders for various types of birds, mammals, reptiles, etc. I also have folders for flowers, trees and plants. In addition, I keep "inspiration" files. These files include clippings of artwork from all different kinds of media - pottery, woodworking, ceramics, Native American, paintings, etc. When I'm feeling a bit stagnant and uninspired, just flipping through this file will get my creative juices flowing again!

**Do you have a tip or tutorial we can feature here? Please [contact me](#).*

My August project. I had a lot of fun with this one. It was inspired by our recent trip to Minnesota, where I saw plenty of both Cardinals and Aspens. When we visited the leaves on the Aspens were still green, but I decided to paint these in their beautiful early fall colors.



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Reader's Mailbag



*Thought I would drop you a quick email to thank you for your quick, efficient handling of my recent order with you. I was aware when I placed the order that you would be unable to ship the items until you returned from your trip, but was surprised at how fast you were on it when you did return. I also want to say that I appreciate the no charge burrs you included in the order. Solid business policies seem to be so hard to come by these days....can't tell you all the personal horror stories! Won't hesitate to order from you again. **Carla Bratt***

*My husband and I took two of your classes at Welburn Farm. I just wanted to tell you how much we learned and how wonderful the classes were for us. You are a great teacher, patient and informative. Thank you so much for braving the heat and many questions! Thanks again, **Bradd and Brooks Bush***

I always look forward to your newsletters because you have such helpful hints and I trust your judgment on what burrs to use on the gourds. I am a self taught gourd artist and when needing more instruction I always refer to your books and also your online tutorials. One day I hope to make the trip down there and take a class from you. I recently saw that you were having a



Some of you may remember last year when I held a special raffle for one of my gourds to raise funds for the fight against Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. This raffle was to honor my good friend, Russ Conley, an avid gourder who has been diagnosed with ALS. Through the generosity of many, the raffle raised \$775 for ALS. (Read more about last year's auction in the [August 07 newsletter](#).) Even though Russ's health does not allow for him to be as active with gourds, he continues to work hard to raise funds to support further research of this deadly disease.

This year, Ardee Walters of Hawaii has graciously created a website with a special gourd auction which will run from September 1st to September 20th. Funds raised from this auction will be donated to the Orange County ALS chapter in support of "Russ's Rascals", which is Russ Conley's "Walk to D'Feet ALS®" fundraising team. I am donating a special personalized and autographed copy of my "Gourds" book for the auction. Also, LaVonne Hall purchased one of my gourds several years ago, and has decided donate it as a special raffle item. Many other artists have donated their work for this great cause.

class on unfinished projects... what a great idea! I am sure there are many of us with those sitting around. Barb Wolters

Please show your support and visit the [special auction website](#) to submit your bid and raise funds for ALS!

Featured Instructional Videos of the Month:

Due to requests from some of my readers, Smart Flix has added **two new gourd titles from Kathy James!** Thanks for sending in your input!

Click on the link above to visit SmartFlix.

Great for those who don't learn as well from books!



[Beaded Gourds with Kathy James](#)



[Introduction to Woodburning with Kathy James](#)



[The History Channel Modern Marvels: Glue](#)



[Lords of the Gourd PBS Video](#)

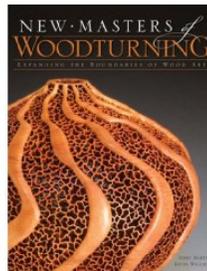
Featured Gourd of the Month:

Tripod Urn

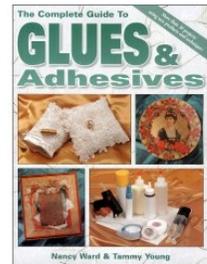
This piece has added cherry wood legs and handle. The legs were added using a woodworkers mortise and tenon joint. The wooden legs have small square "tenons" which are inserted and glued into the "mortise" - a square hole. This is a very strong joint compared to what you could achieve by merely gluing the legs onto the surface of the gourd. As an alternative, you could also use pairs of dowels with matching holes.



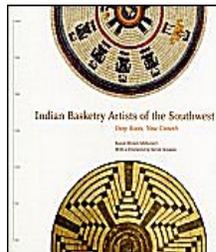
Featured Books of the Month:



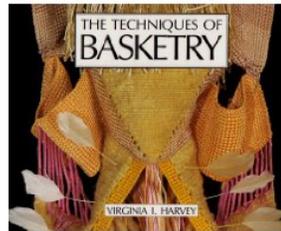
[New Masters of Woodturning](#)



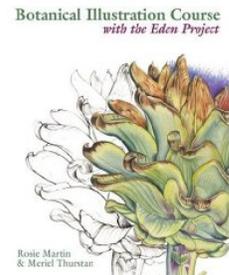
[The Complete Guide to Glues and Adhesives](#)



[Indian Basketry Artists of the Southwest](#)



[Techniques of Basketry by Virginia Harvey](#)



[Botanical Illustration Course](#)

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<http://www.arizonagourds.com/Sept08.html>

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Recommend This Site

Here are some non-gourd specific titles that you may find interesting.

New Masters of Woodturning is a fabulous art book, featuring some of the top contemporary woodturners. Even though it is not about gourds, you'll see some incredibly inspiring pieces of art from woodturners that inspired and influenced me greatly in my own gourd art.

The *Techniques of Basketry* had been recommended to me by several gourd/basketweavers, and the *Indian Basketry Artists of the Southwest* provides some stunning inspirational examples of contemporary Native Basketweavers.

The Complete Guide to Glues and Adhesives is a good reference book for crafters. No book is ever totally complete, but this one will answer many of the most commonly asked questions about different types of adhesives and glues.

I recently purchased the *Botanical Illustration Course* book because I've always been fascinated with accurate, detailed and realistic renderings, and botanicals are a perfect subject matter for gourds. This is a great book with plenty of information on basic techniques and more detailed information for more advanced artists. There are tons of beautiful full color illustrations throughout the book. I really like this one!

*Be sure to visit all the different book pages shown at right to see some of the many other titles that

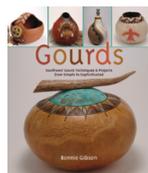
Gourds - General
Patterns and Designs
Gourds - Misc.

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If your email address changes, just sign up again with your new address - no need to email me the change, as I purge non-working addresses monthly.

Arizona Gourds HOME

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(Click on book cover for ordering information.)

Gourds Southwest Gourd Techniques & Projects from Simple to Sophisticated
by **Bonnie Gibson**

are available. Click on each topic to see a variety of suggested books about each subject.

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