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Arizona Gourds

September updates from the desert southwest...

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Welcome to the September issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!

It's been a busy summer! Last month I enjoyed a trip to Kentucky, where in addition to 4 fun days of classes, I got to enjoy 2 extra days filled with sightseeing of the area. Many thanks to Janet Barnett, CeCe Thomas, and the Kentucky Gourd Society as well as to the people that traveled from other states to attend the workshops.

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Scenes of Kentucky hospitality! Clockwise from top left:

- 1) Old wagon outside of gallery in Bloomfield.
- 2) Is it an outhouse or a tool shed? I didn't look to see. ;)
- 3) Magnolia bud and praying mantis
- 4) Typical old stone wall built without mortar



Update: Gourd Classes

Last chance - Classes in Boise, Idaho September 23-25 - 5 different classes, information available on my [classes page](#) - contact [Sue Kosta](#) for registration, travel and lodging information. A few spaces might still be available for the weekend classes.

NEW TUCSON CLASS - "Rock Art and Gourd Pottery" (Photo to the right)
Check out the [classes page](#) for more photos and details! Class sessions are full - write to be added to the waiting lists.

I will be teaching 4 days of classes at the **Texas Gourd Festival**, October 13-16. Classes and registration information are posted on the [Texas Gourd Society page](#). *This will probably be my last trip to this area - so hope to see you there.



*Join the class updates list to receive advance notice of upcoming classes. Get the news first and have the best chance for popular classes!



[Join The Class updates List](#)

***Notice: I will be not be shipping from September 21st - 26th. All orders placed during these times will be held and shipped out just as soon as possible. Orders will be filled in the order in which they were received. This is a one person business, and I appreciate your patience while the shop is closed.**

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



New! Fish Tip woodburning pen. The tip of this pen is curved to burn decorative "C" shaped designs, and it also burns wonderful scales on fish. With a bit of practice, you can hold the tip upside down and draw the pen to create two parallel lines for borders. On the [woodburner page](#).

TOOL Update The manufacturer of **Rotary Chisels** has informed me that due to the increase in carbide steel, these burs will be raised from \$18 to \$23. The remaining stock will stay at the old price until they are gone, and then they will be discontinued. On the [Carving Burs page](#). On the same page, **sets of 3 diamond wheels are on sale!** These are great as mini sanders, and the smallest size is great for setting small cabochons or undercutting relief carvings.

Natural, Russet Red and Black pine needle bundles are on the [Kits and Supplies page](#). Each bundle has 4+ ounces of southern long leaf pine needles, perfect for weaving. Typical length is 14".

Feature of the month - Ink Dye Tips

Last month, I posted a request on the Arizona Gourds Facebook page for ideas of what my newsletter readers would like to see in upcoming issues. One of the topics that was suggested was to include some more tips and ideas for working with ink dyes. While I have used ink dyes on a few projects, I am no expert - so I went to the real expert for some answers.

Maria Dellos of Tucson, Arizona, is the true pioneer and expert at working with ink dyes. While employed at a local craft store, she had the fun task of attending trade shows, and experimenting with a huge variety of new products. One of the products that she experimented with was rubber stamp ink dye refills. While these products were originally designed for use on porous surfaces such as paper, she liked their light-fast properties. After playing around with them, she found that setting them with heat made them perfect for use on gourds. Her work with "Memories" brand ink dyes has pioneered the way for many gourd artists who were in search of an easy to use product that provides the translucency of leather dye, but with more light-fast, non-fading properties. Maria has written a book on ink dyes, and also has a website where she offers more innovative ideas for incorporating products from other hobbies into gourd art.

*Note - "Memories" Brand ink dyes by Stewart Superior are the same formula as "Gourdmaster™" Ink Dyes and may be used in the same manner. Other brands of ink dyes for stampers such as "Ancient Page", "Adirondack", "Chalk Ink" and others may work similarly, but have a slightly different base and dyes. Some are alcohol based, others are not - do some experimenting to find which products you prefer.

Using Memories Ink Dyes by Maria Dellos

Using Memories Ink Dyes to your gourd art offers permanent rich color with the promise of archival safe, acid free and fade resistant finishes to your gourds. Now that the factual statement has been reported; let's go into specifics of the do's and don'ts to be successful with ink dyes.

How do I apply the Ink Dyes? To color a large area of the gourd you can use felt or a 1" x 1" ink cube. To color specific detailed area you can use a q-tip, microbrush or paintbrush. Whatever your choice, be aware that the inks are highly concentrated and using less is better. Heat set after each color is applied. This prevents touching the wet ink and transferring the ink in places not intended.

How can I fix the gourd surface where the ink was not intended? If the ink dye carried over to an area that is still natural gourd surface, you can remove it with a baby wipe. Do not do this if there is ink dye already on that section, this action will ruin that inked area. Instead, allow it to dry, and then gently sand it off and carefully apply the ink back. Using a q-tip with a trace of ink applied to the tip, dab over the sanded area until the color appears even; heat set.

Can I apply ink over a varnished gourd? The answer is NO! The varnish applied over the ink provides a strong and durable finish to the inks. Inks applied over that surface will instantly remove the varnish and the ink underneath. This action has amazed me, however, I have found great use for this when I intentionally want to remove a detailed area and to re-ink it with new color. Most of the color will come off with a baby wipe. You possibly may have to use a little pressure to scrape it off completely. The surface is now ready to color as if no color has been there prior.

Can I Blend Colors? Let's take a good example using a fall leaf pattern. Suggested color inks to use: Port Red, ArtPrint Brown, Pinetree Green and Mango. Use one q-tip for each color ink, so plan on using many for this technique. Apply a streak of one color at a time over the surface of the leaf. Be sure to leave natural gourd in between each application so you can drag the colors into each other. The ink will remain wet enough so you can drag and feather the colors together. If at this time you need to add more color, carefully and sparingly add another streak of color to the area and repeat the process.

Final Step – Varnishing I have discovered the best way to apply the final coat of varnish over the entire gourd is with a cosmetic sponge. Simply dab a light coat of varnish over your entire gourd. Do not drag or it will cause colors to smear. I have found Polyurethane Water Based Varnish to be the most compatible and durable when used with Memories Inks. If so desired, you can apply a second coat of varnish

Please use a cosmetic sponge to apply varnish. Do not use ink dyes.



Butterfly done with blended colors of inks.

Maria Dellos discusses using metallic inks on gourds.

More Tips

Tip from Barbara Larkum of AZ: Use a piece of hard plastic such as plexiglass as a permanent ink palette. Squeeze a drop onto the surface, then use microbrushes or cosmetic q-tip type applicators that have one flat, blunt end and one pointed end. Another great applicator for covering large surfaces is to buy inexpensive sheets of craft felt, then cut them into small squares. Squeeze a drop or two of ink onto the felt, then use the flat end of the applicator to spread the ink from the felt onto the gourd.



Joan Appelt used many colors of ink dyes on this piece called "Happy Days".



Elaine Sutherland of Iowa used Adirondack alcohol inks on these two pieces.

Below: Shannon Ashcroft of WI used various colors blended together on this

Jennifer Zingg of KY has used inks as the main source of pigment on her gourds since she started 10 years ago. "I never cared for leather dyes; they fade badly and they are hard to control for detail. I use them with other pigments now for a mixed media effect."

***Please note, Jennifer does NOT use ink dyes - but rather uses India inks.** She likes Dr. PH Martin's Bombay India Inks - translucent pigments. She says they are the best she has found and provides very vibrant colors. "I often use ink as the background color, overlaying acrylic or opaque inks to create designs, and then I carve them with a dremel tool."



Left and Below: Gourd Sculpture by Jennifer Zingg and a close up showing some of the vibrant colors.





Tamsen Fox of Hawaii uses ink dyes for transparent effects and acrylics for bold, opaque colors. Her [website](#) has other lovely examples of her Hawaiian art, including some made with the ni'ihau method of using coffee or bark dyes that was mentioned in the [August 2011 newsletter](#). Tamsen is also experimenting with other dyes made with native plants.

Product Review: Hot Wax Stylus and Encaustic Wax

Last month, we looked at wax resist, where wax was applied and then removed to reveal an undyed surface. While researching this topic, I became interested in the idea of using encaustic wax on gourds. Encaustic wax is actually a very old technique, where beeswax, resin,(for hardness) and colors were blended together and painted on surfaces while in the liquid form. Modern collage artists create encaustic paintings by building layer after lay of colors, and at the same time adding fibers, paper, and other materials to create a textural effect. The cooled wax may also be scribed in a sgrafitto manner and manipulated with a variety of tools.

I contacted [Kandicorp](#) - a company that specializes in encaustic tools and supplies. I got one of their "Hot Wax Stylus" pens and some of their prepared encaustic waxes (the formula makes these waxes much harder and more durable than crayons.) The stylus tool looks something like a woodburner, and has 5 different tips ranging from flat spatula like shapes, to a brush, ball and a writing tip. The tool has a built in on/off switch in the handle. I decided to try a very simple collage on a small gourd using wax, coarse fibers, torn newspaper and gold leaf.



Left: Hot Wax Art Stylus, tips and prepared wax.

Right: Using the large spatula tip to melt and apply hot wax to the gourd surface.

Below, left to right: Embedding fiber into a base of warmed wax.

Wax is melted over the fiber,





adhering it to the gourd shell.
Embedded torn newspaper (the crosswords!) and bits of gold leaf.



Left - closeup of embedded materials and wax texture.

Right: Finished project with added blue wax accent.



[Hot Wax Art Stylus](#)



It was fun to use a new tool and try some new techniques. If you really like texture and unusual finishes, you would probably enjoy trying encaustics. The tool performed well, but I also used a hot tool to quickly melt the wax cakes and then used the heated tool to spread the hot wax. The wax dries quickly, leaving interesting patterns. It was a good method for fastening down the fibers, paper and leafing. I only used a couple of colors, but the company has a wide variety of colors. You can also mix your own; there are formulas on the internet for making your own encaustic waxes. It would be a lot of fun to do some wall art collages on paper or other surfaces, but gourds are good solid bases for encaustic techniques.



[Encaustic Art](#)

Reader's Mailbag:

Bonnie, I really enjoyed the August Newsletter! It was jam packed with a lot of information and came just at the right time. Like many, I have not been in the garage to work on my carving here in NC since it has been so very hot. So even though I have played with resist in the past, the juices are flowing again and this is something I can play with in my work room.

Thank you for continuing to inspire me. Kindest regards, *Dianne Masi - Hampstead, NC*

That's what we like to hear - keep those topic ideas coming so we can continue to offer you a great newsletter each month.

Reader's Mailbag:

Bonnie, I'm fairly new to gourding and have not had a gourd crack on me so far. Today I did. I had cut, cleaned and cut my design in a gourd that was about 1/4" thick. I had painted the inside with gel glaze and black acrylic paint. I was letting it dry when there was a loud pop, and the crack is too wide to pull back together. I altered my pattern and it will be fine, but I would like to know is there is something I did wrong or didn't do that would help keep this from



Coming Soon.... Got a Suggestion?

Do you have a technique, product or project you'd like to see addressed in a future issue of the newsletter? I'm always looking for great ideas to pass along to our readers! If you have ideas, please send your suggestions to: bonnie@arizonagourds.com.

happening very often. *Paula Bownds - TX*

Sometimes when gourds have gotten very dry (like they often do in AZ and TX), the application of anything water based causes a sudden swelling and then a constriction as it dries. I've had several exploded gourd over the years - some are just minor cracks and other ruin the gourd. I never use water based paints on the insides of gourds for that reason. Instead, I use spray paints. Because they are solvent based they don't cause the expansion and contraction you get with water based products. I also put off gourd cleaning until our summer rains start and the humidity goes up. Otherwise it's just too much of a shock to the gourd to go from dry to wet.

Paula replied: Right now in West Texas we wouldn't get any gourds cleaned if we wait for some humidity!!!! I'll just start using spray paint.



Reader's Mailbag:

Bonnie, here is my finished doodles and glass gourd - one just woodburned and one with color. I really enjoyed your classes! Hope you will come again soon. *Jan Briseno - KY*

Right: Two photos of Jan's gourd, and some of the gourds from the KY Doodles and Glass class while in progress.



Reader's Mailbag:

Just had to share this lovely note....Thank you, Alice! :)

Hi Bonnie, I just wanted to drop you a line & let you know that my shows are all up this year & I have you to thank for that. I have been getting more compliments than ever & people are finally see the detail & craftsmanship that goes into gourd art. I truly believe it's you that brought me to this next level & I just wanted to drop a note of thanks. Thanks again Bonnie for taking me not only to the next level in gourd art, but in helping my sales exceed my expectations. *Alice Pawlowski - IN*

Did you know..... that people that "Like" Arizona Gourds on Facebook get special offers, up to the minute news about new products and classes, and other gourdng updates? Please consider joining us on Facebook for the latest news and specials. I always post newsletter notices, new items, sales, and other gourd related info onto the Arizona Gourds page routinely.

(Just a note - I don't add gourd friends on my personal page, I save that for family and non-gourdng friends.)

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Bonnie Gibson, Cheryl Lehmann Kroll and 1,450 others like this. · Admin Page Insights

Follow us on 

The [Gourd Art Enthusiasts site](#) continues to grow! We have **over 2000 members**, with gourd enthusiasts from all over the world! Membership is free and easy. The site also has state groups, event listings, a Q&A forum and a chat feature if you need a quick answer to a gourdng question! [Check out our two great new GAE T-Shirt designs!](#)



Tip of the Month: Painting the inside of the gourd - without making a mess.



Years ago, someone asked me how I was able to spray paint the inside of the gourd without messing up the outside. I mentioned that over sprays could be easily removed with mineral spirits - but they replied that doing so would mess up all the work they had already put into



decorating the outer shell!

I'm sure most of you know that it's smarter to paint the inside of the gourd before you paint the outside, but there ARE ways to paint the inside without messing up the exterior.

Some people use watered down acrylic paints or leather dyes to color the gourd interior. You do have to be careful with either of these methods, a waterbased paints can possibly cause enough expansion and contraction to crack the shell. Dyes penetrate the porous gourd shell so deeply that in some cases they can soak through weak spots in the shell and cause dark staining.

For those reasons, I prefer using spray paint. I buy inexpensive flat black spray for about a dollar a can at Lowe's, Walmart or even Dollar stores.

If you are concerned about making a mistake, use masking tape to cover the top edge where oversprays might occur, then remove the tape after the paint has dried. With practice, even this step is unnecessary. The trick is to hold the can as close to the gourd as possible, so the nozzle is never more than an inch or two from the opening. Spray the deepest part of the gourd first. When the mist settles, you may have to go over some areas to get good coverage. Work your way up the inside of the gourd, rotating the gourd frequently to cover all areas.

OK, here's the tricky part. When you get near the top, you want to **concentrate on spraying with the nozzle as close as possible to the inside of the gourd opening, aiming across towards the inner side of the top edge.** Use **short bursts** of spray to make sure the can is lined up with the areas you want to paint. Spray a bit at a time, rotating the gourd and spraying with short bursts. Remember, practice will

Sometimes, intentional overspraying is an attractive way to highlight areas. In this case, you would be using a can of spray paint like an airbrush, creating soft, feathered paint edges.



On the gourds shown here, both the bases and the tops were lightly oversprayed to create soft, shadowed areas. Intentional overspraying is done after the gourd is painted or dyed - so you really want to practice this first so you feel comfortable! To practice, get a scrap piece of cardboard, and try spraying the edges. Spray from different distances using short bursts, and try to concentrate on darkening only the edges with the spray. Usually holding the can around 6 inches or so away works best. If you are too close you will get heavy paint that runs, but if you are too far away your overspray will cover the entire surface instead just producing the soft airbrush like effect.

**Do you have a tip or tutorial we may feature in a future newsletter? Please [contact me](#).*

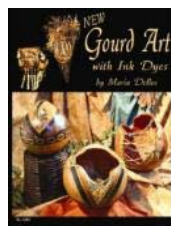
Featured Gourd of the Month:

"Southwest Vessel II"

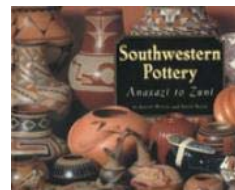
This gourd was started as a class demo earlier this year. The opposite side has inlaid Inlance and 2 more different dragonfly patterns as well as more carved basketry and some carved ripples..I've always enjoyed using the Native arts of the Southwest as an inspiration.



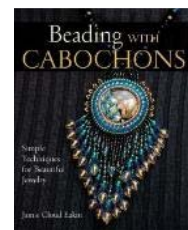
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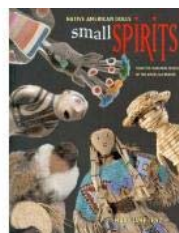
[Gourd Art with Ink Dyes](#)



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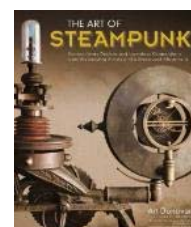
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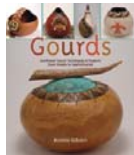
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(Click on book cover for ordering information.)

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

The hardcover edition is now OUT OF PRINT!

I still have some on hand, but supplies are limited. Last chance to get a copy before they are gone!

[Arizona Gourds HOME](#)

[American Dye](#)

Gourd Art with Ink Dyes is the only book on the market that deals with specifics of using ink dyes. The book is loaded with specific brand name product placements - but the information applies to all brands of ink dyes.

The other books are a mixture of books that I found interesting or useful. The **Southwestern Pottery** book is a favorite in my own bookshelf - it has lots of wonderful examples of pottery from all of the various tribes of the southwest.

Beading with Cabochons is a lovely book with beading ideas from simple to complicated. Great for those of you that want to make fun jewelry or beaded gourd embellishments.

I have not personally see the last three books, but they all got great reviews on Amazon, and they are titles that really look intriguing to me. I'd love to hear from you if you own a copy of these!

*Want to see my listing of top gourd books? Here is my ["Listmania" listing on Amazon](#)



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