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# Arizona Gourds

June updates from the desert southwest...



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**Welcome to the June issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!**

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[Gucci.com](http://Gucci.com)

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**Happy Anniversary to us - this issue marks the 5th anniversary of the monthly Arizona Gourds Newsletters!** I am surprised how quickly time has passed, and I hope you've enjoyed reading all of the issues. **Many, many thanks go out to all of our faithful readers that have sent in photos and ideas for the newsletters - as you might imagine, the newsletter takes a lot of time to write each month, so your submissions really help me out a lot!**

\*All of the older issues are still online and available for viewing at any time. While some of the information in the older issues is no longer current, the photos, articles and tips are always good reading. You will find links to all of the old issues on the [Newsletter Index page](#).

I recently suffered my second misadventure with a carpenter bee, who decided to drill a few holes and tunnels into an in-progress gourd that was sitting outside on my workbench. Carpenter bees love to tunnel into wood, creating a series of smaller tunnels where they can deposit their eggs. The female returns with pollen that she places next to the eggs so the hatching larvae will have food. The young bees eventually tunnel back out of their nest. The Arizona version of these bees is quite large and drills a perfect 1/4" - 3/8" hole, leaving behind a pile of sawdust. They are pollinators, and the female has a stinger while the male does not.



Desert Carpenter Bees - Females. The males are smaller and lighter colored and do not tunnel, although they will fly frantically around the nest to scare off potential predators.



**Update: Gourd Classes**

I will be teaching at a **gourd workshop/retreat in Kentucky August 4-7**. Classes are held indoors so no worries about the heat and humidity. For those of you disappointed that I'm not teaching in PA this summer, this is a good alternative and my only trip to the eastern states this year. Contact [Janet Barnett](#) for more info, or check the pdf file for registration.



*\*Classes in Idaho in September - sign up for the class updates list if you want to receive information.*

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](#).

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



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



**New! Mixed Bone Beads.** Bone beads in a mix of dark and light colors, no two bags are alike - assortments of styles and sizes.

**Half Shell Inlaid Earrings.** These earrings are lovely to wear and also make fantastic accents on gourd masks! Beautiful stone inlays on each pair. **Both are available on the [Bone Beads and Embellishments page](#).**

**New! Leather Purse Strap** Genuine leather, hand stitched and finished with nickel rings. *Limited, one time purchase - while they last!* On the [Kits, Displays and Misc. page](#).

**New! Magnesite Heishi.** Real stone; magnesite is dyed turquoise and it's hard to tell from the real thing. However, it costs less and each strand is longer than the real turquoise. On the [Supplies page](#).





**New! Additional styles in decorative tacks.** Use these to attach drum heads, tack in purse linings, or embellishing. **New colors include pewter, copper and nickel silver.** On the [Metals](#) page.  
**Continuing Sale:** Special pricing on 14 and 16" drum skins on the [Musical Supplies](#) page.



### May Feature - Gourd Purses

If you've ever attended a gourd show, it's fun to see some of the ladies showing off their lovely gourd purses - and often carrying one around routinely leads to unexpected sales! Several people have mentioned that after carrying their gourd purse to the local hair salon, grocery store, or to work, that people have stopped them to ask about them and to find out where they can get one for themselves or for a gift. Many gourd purses are made from thick canteens, but as the photos show below, there are other gourd shapes and sizes that may be used.

\*Note -- Canteen Gourd Purses are available on the [Musical Supplies](#) page. *of their gourd art!*



Canteen gourd purses by **Linda Ashmore of Arkansas**. Linda offers some helpful tips - she uses ponytail holders for the elastic closures. Many of the interiors are finished with a decopague of torn brown paper bags, and a few are decorated with purchased dreamcatchers that are laced onto the gourd with artificial sinew. Linda uses either purchased metal hinges or leather and artificial sinew. Gourds are coated inside and out with 3-4 coats of polyurethane.

\*Note -- Artificial Sinew is available on the [Special Embellishments](#) page, Dreamcatcher are available on the [Kits, Displays and Misc.](#) page.



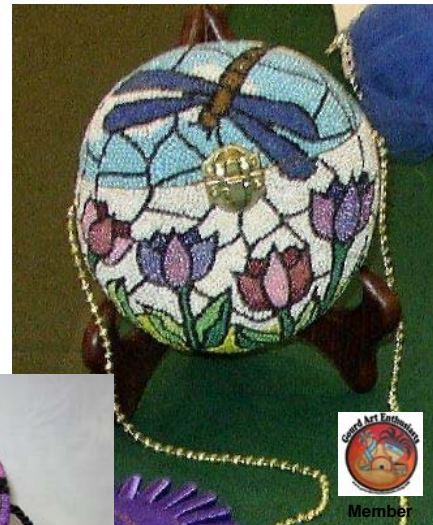
Above: **Audrey Augirre of New Jersey** has some great ideas - she uses small gourds with a woven top for change purses, and vintage neckties for shoulder straps on larger bags.



Above: **Cindy Cech-Auxier of Wisconsin** created these beautiful purses. The straps are made from heavy tapestry cording. Small purse above has bamboo purse handle.



**Sandra Butler of Indiana** made this group of purses that are all done with Huichol beading. One bead at a time is placed onto a prepared beeswax/pitch surface. Sandy says that "using decorative ropes & chains are my way of making purses that remind me of the antique ones of the 1920's Art Deco Era. These also are more decorative than useful because of heat & sun can soften the wax & make the beads shift & move."



Below: Paisley purse by **Karen Friend of AZ**

Wonderful "leather tooled" gourd purse by **Sylvia Gaines of Texas.**





Right: Crocheted top purse by Claire Cassan of Texas.

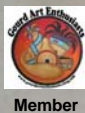
Below: Purse by Gail Wilson. Handle is upholstery cording and it has an elastic monkey knot closure. Lined with fabric and hinged with a metal hinge.



Below: Small neck pouch made by Sher Fowee of Ohio. This uses a small gourd part and leather backing. You can see more of her work on her website.



Right: Purse by Nan Noble of Arizona



Beautifully constructed Asian theme gourd purses from Christine Chan of



Beautifully constructed Asian theme gourd purses from **Christine Chan of California**. Her purses are all fully lined and very sturdily made. They have small feet so they will sit when not being carried. Christine says this method of construction is very labor intensive, but the finished result is lovely. She sells her purses on [etsy](http://etsy.com). Note that the unfinished purse shown above is also shown finished to the left



Below: Gourd Purses by **Gloria Crane of California**. Gloria makes fully lined purses with leather hinges. She also teaches a two day workshop on her process. You can see more of her purses on her [website](http://website.com).





**Barbara Rothwell of WI** uses some unusual shaped gourds and hardware for her purses. Some of the purses are made from elongated apple gourds. The hardware includes furniture pulls and handles, caribiner clips, luggage type mesh straps and locking clips. The small pouches are woven with yarn cording that she makes herself.



Above: **Stacy Annon of Washington** handpaints paper and uses it to line the inside of her gourd purses.

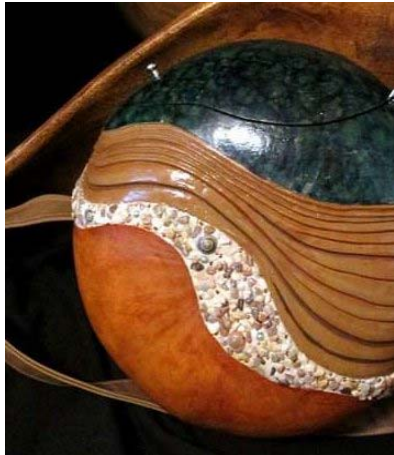
Member



Below: **Nikki Ogle of TX** has her own creative outlook on gourd purses, which



**Karen Hundt-Brown of Michigan** made this "Tree of Life" purse, which is extensively pyroengraved. The purse interior is lined with leaves punched from various fall colored papers that are decoupage onto the surface. The handle is a silk cord.



Right: "Amazing Grace" - Purse by **Kristin Johnson of Kansas**. Kristin bought the constructed but undecorated purse from Christine Chan. She woodburned the lines, then used an oil pastel/mineral spirit technique for the colors. *"I simply color on a piece of paper with oil pastels creating my pallet, then dip my brush in mineral spirits and brush the color. This creates a beautiful oil paint which I can control. I can make it as thick or thin as I'd like and blend colors wonderfully without having to pour any paint or inks. I apply a fixative when I am finished."* You can see more of Kristin's work in her [etsy shop](#).



Below: **Nikki Ogilvie of TX** has her own creative outlook on gourd purses, which are influenced by some of her favorite subject matters - bugs and sea creatures! Nikki uses metal hinges and inserted rare earth magnets as closures.



Monarch Butterfly wing purse, Nautilus shell purse, Sea Urchin purse and Seashore Purse



Member



Below: **Donna Hillbush of Pennsylvania** made this unusual purse from a dipper gourd with a curved neck. The interior is lined with satin and the hinges and fasteners are made from leather strips. Looks like this one could be worn as a shoulder bag!





Above and Left: Booker Preston of California uses a high speed air tool to carve beautifully detailed designs on his gourds. You can see more on his [website](#).

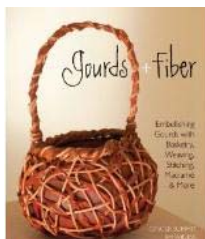
**Reader's Mailbag:**

Hi Bonnie, This newsletter and all the gourd photos are wonderful, thanks. I want to grow some little round (not oval) gourds and I can't find anyone with the seeds. I don't know the name of the gourd. Can you help me out? [Harriette Edmonds, SC](#)

*Looks a little bit like a coyote or buffalo gourd, but I've seen some thicker shelled gourds like this that appeared to be an egg gourd variety. Can you help Harriette out? Click on her name above to send her an email.*



**Book Reviews**



[Gourds + Fiber](#)

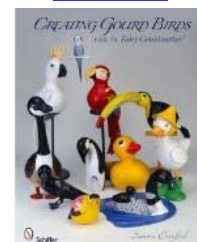
*Gourds + Fiber* is another nice addition from authors Jim Widess and Ginger Summit. It's obvious that the authors worked hard to write a book that would offer some new or less commonly seen techniques. The book has a brief history and gourd basics at the beginning, but explores topics such as teneriffe, beaded rims, lacing, netting, and macrame, woven rims and bases, decorative basketry techniques, and much more. While this is a project book, each project introduces some new techniques and ideas. The wealth of photos and instructions will inspire you to try some new creative ideas and develop new skills. This is a book I will keep - even if I never made any of the projects, the ideas and techniques are wonderful reference material. Printed in paperback a good value for the price. *Lark Publishing 144 pages \$19.95*



[Building Gourd Birdhouses](#)

*Building Gourd Birdhouses* and *Creating Gourd Birds* are new books from Sammie Crawford. Sammie's background is in decorative painting, and both of these books are heavy on painting how-to's. The first pages in both books are almost identical; they contain basic information on gourd shapes, cleaning, painting techniques and making plywood bases (used in some projects.)

*Building Gourd Birdhouses* has designs for 9 birdhouses and one bird feeder. It does not include any information on hole sizes and placement necessary for making functional birdhouses. Instead, this book focuses solely on decorative birdhouses and painting techniques. Patterns are included along with limited assembly instructions and detailed painting instructions. This book would be good for the person that wants to make the projects exactly as shown on the cover. Printed in paperback - a bit overpriced for the content and length. *Shiffer Publishing 80 pages \$24.95*



[Creating Gourd Birds](#)

*Creating Gourd Birds* has a bit more information on assembly of the projects than the previous book, but the main focus is once again on the painting techniques. Each project has a pattern page showing the gourd shapes needed and basic cutting directions, but the assembly instructions are very general in nature. A beginner might have problems figuring out how assemble each sculpture and how to fit pieces together. A bit more information and tips on joinery would have been helpful. However, the painting instructions are well done, with many detailed photos showing each painting step. Printed in paperback 96 pages \$24.95

Coming next month: A review of Nadine Spier's DVD on Advanced Basket Weaving



The [Gourd Art Enthusiasts site](#) continues to grow! We now have over 1850 members and about 6500 gourd photos to inspire you. Membership is free and easy. The site also has state groups, event listings, a Q&A forum and a chat feature if you need an quick answer to a gourdng question!

**Coming Soon:**

**July - Resist methods and designs**

Have you ever done a gourd doing wax resist or other resist type techniques done using liquid resist products, crayons, contact paper, masking tape, china markers, or any other substance? If so, please send your ideas and photos for the next issue to: [bonnie@arizonagourds.com](mailto:bonnie@arizonagourds.com).



[Check out our two great new GAE T-Shirt designs!](#)

**Tip of the Month: Sanding tricks!**

I'm often asked how I get backgrounds and small carved areas smooth. I use a combination of methods, including some typical hand tools such as sandpaper, diamond or riffler files, or even emery boards. However, here are a couple of tricks you may not have tried.

[Diamond burs](#) are some of my favorite sanding tools. They are inexpensive, and are available in a wide variety of shapes, sizes and grits. A cylinder shape is great for smoothing edges, a long taper is good for tight areas, a ball is handy for clean stippling or sanding channels for heishi. Just pick the shape that matches the area you are sanding. If you already have some diamond burs, practice with them on a scrap piece where the skin has been removed. Still too aggressive? Put the bur into a pin vise, and use the bur as a hand held sander! *Tip: Don't use diamonds on gourd skin - they will clog, overheat, and lose their effectiveness in a very short time. These burs are best used on the inner gourd pulp.* You can see diamond bur samples on the [carving b](#)



Use a [pin vise](#) to hold a diamond bur, then the tool becomes a handheld sander. Spin the pin vise back and forth or use like a pencil eraser to sand small, hard to reach areas. This is less aggressive and more forgiving than using the burs in a rotary tool.

I save the used [small sanding belts that fit my sanding stick](#). Snip the circular cloth backed bands apart where the ends were joined, and you have a great tool for smoothing cut edges. On the gourd to the right, I inserted an end of the strip through an opening and pulled it back out of the other side. Pull the sanding strip back and forth to get a nice rounded, smooth finish. (See the completed gourd below.)



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

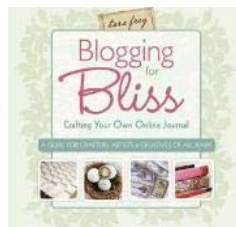
**Featured Gourd of the Month:**

**"Bugling Elk"**

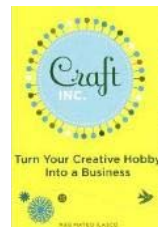
Carved from a thick canteen gourd, with cutouts between the stylized antlers. Elk painted with acrylics, woodburned design and natural gourd shell



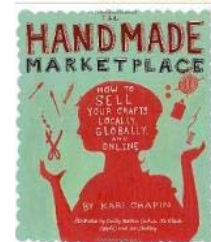
**Featured Books of the Month:**



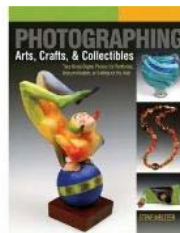
[Blogging for Bliss](#)  
Guide for Artists, Crafters



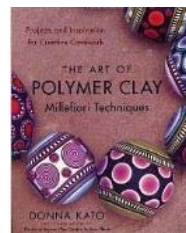
[Craft Inc. Turn Your Creative Hobby into a Business](#)



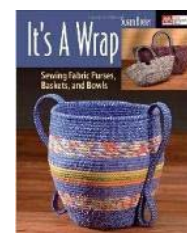
[Handmade Marketplace](#)



[Photographing Arts, Crafts and Collectibles](#)



[Art of Polymer Clay: Millifiori Techniques](#)



[It's a Wrap: Purses, Baskets, Bowls](#)

With craft fair season in full swing, here are some highly rated books on craft related sales topics - including blogging about your craft (we can always use a few more good gourd blogs!), and selling online and at shows. I've also included a book that talks about how to photograph your crafts and small items. If you ever want to have your photos published or in a portfolio, it's important to take good photos.



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Thanks for checking out the latest news! Feel free to pass the newsletter link along to your friends.

<http://www.arizonagourds.com/June2011.html>

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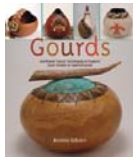
**Note:** Please check your spam folder near the end of each month and add our address to your "safe senders" list. Many emails bounce each month due to spam blockers.

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.



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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](#)

I've also included a couple of technique books, including a purse book that fits with our theme this month. ***Do you have a favorite craft book that has inspired your gourd art? I'd love to hear about it.***

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



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*\*Please visit the book page links shown at right to view collections of related titles. Each topic includes a variety of suggested books about each subject.*

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