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Arizona Gourds

Updates from the desert southwest...

Printable PDF File

Welcome to the May/June issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!

High Pressure Pump
Delivering Reliable Water Pressure On Demand To The Highest Floor!



June marks the anniversary of the Arizona Gourds newsletters. I have been writing these monthly (missed a couple this past year) newsletters since 2006. As I have mentioned previously, they take a great deal of time to write and send out, so they may be sporadic going forward. I wasn't going to write another one until next month, but May is going to be really busy so figured I had better get one out sooner!

I will be doing quite a bit of travel the next couple of months, so please be sure to check the home page of the website for notices about scheduled shipping delays. If you need to order, you may want to do so before my travels, as I tend to sell out of some items at classes. I will fill orders just as fast as possible, but one trip alone will have me away for 2 weeks as I do workshops in Missouri and Colorado. I appreciate your patience during these times; I know it is an inconvenience, and I promise to ship your orders as soon as possible on my return.

Anticipated dates where I will NOT be shipping due to my teaching schedule - May 13-26. and May 30 - June 9.

Arizona Gourds Newsletter Index

See all our old newsletters from the past 9 years! Articles and Tips are indexed.

[Newsletter Index](#)

Note about the newsletter email list:

Once you have signed up for the newsletter email list, you never have to sign up again, unless you change your email address. If you have already signed up and you aren't getting the emails, it is because your email provider considers our emails to be spam and they are blocked at your end. **Signing up again will not help and makes a lot more work for me - the email list is maintained by hand. You can always read the current issue from the home page of our website. and you can read old issues from the newsletter index link on the home page.**

***ALL Amazon purchases made through site links and the search box help support Arizona Gourds and the Gourd Art Enthusiasts websites, and it costs you nothing extra!**

Just type what you are looking for into the search box below. **Can't see the search box? Please disable your ad blocker for the Arizona Gourds domain.*



Update: Gourd Classes

Enter email address here

Submit

Enter your email address and hit the submit button to join the class updates notification list.

Short notice opening: A space has opened in the 3 day Missouri workshop in Raymondville, MO, where I will be teaching the War Shirt, Mask Rattle and Pueblo Ladies class on May 22-24th. For info, contact [Sophia Delaat](mailto:SophiaDelaat@yahoo.com) at [sophiadelaat@yahoo.com](mailto:SophiaDelaat@yahoo.com)

New Class offering: Join me and the Washington State Gourd Society for 2 days of classes, August 13th and 14th (Thursday -Friday). I will be teaching Spiral Patterns and Fancy Filigree. Classes will be held in Onalaska, WA. For more info or to register, contact [Jane Smith](mailto:JaneSmith@gmail.com) (our hostess) at smithmjgw@gmail.com

Coming in the Fall - an newly updated version of the "Carving with Cutouts" class for my southwestern friends. I will be using a new desert cottontail pattern and will be teaching this class in both Arizona and New Mexico. Note: If you live in the Las Cruces, NM area, contact [Sylvia Hendrickson](mailto:SylviaHendrickson@gmail.com) (sylviasgourds@gmail.com) for info on a 2 day carving workshop including Feather Carving and Carving with Cutouts which will be held Sept. 16th and 17th. Two more days of classes will be offered in Albuquerque, NM on Sept 19th and 20th, where I will be teaching the "Pueblo Ladies" and the Carving with Cutouts classes. For more info, contact the NM Gourd society at nmgourdsociety@gmail.com. This will also be offered in Tucson in October (look for signups to start for those sessions in June.) Look at the featured gourd at the bottom of the newsletter for the design in progress.

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



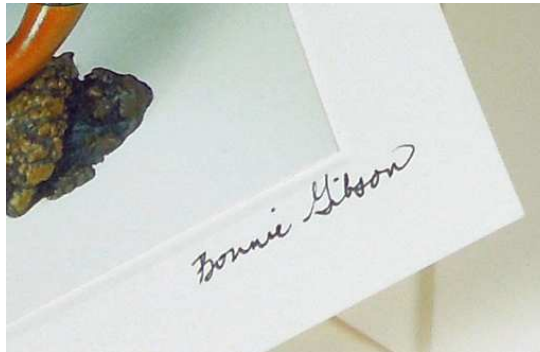
New - Diamond core drills. These small drills are actually a hollow tube coated with diamond grit for drilling through glass and stone. These are used with water for lubrication (I dip the bit into water or immerse the stone in a small amount of water as I drill). Perfect for either enlarging holes so they will accept leather cords or laces, or for adding holes to cabochons or glass for hanging. 3/32" shaft, in a **NEWLY ADDED 2mm** size, or in a 3mm size.

Also, **8mm diamond inverted cones** are perfect for undercutting, sanding and texturing. 3/32" shank. **On the [Carving Burs](#) page.**

New - Gourd Art Note Cards

These note cards are 4x6", and all have a lovely, full color glossy photo on the front of the embossed card. The gourds are beautifully photographed and are high quality images. The inside of each card is blank for you to write your own message. **Each card has been hand signed**, includes a mailing envelope, and each card/envelope set is individually wrapped in a crystal clear sleeve. You can buy these individually, or by the collection. On the ["For Sale"](#) page.

Special - As a bonus, purchase a collection of 4 and receive a free 5th surprise card as a bonus. That means you will get 5 cards for the price of 4.



By request and now available - single grit packs of Abranet sanding mesh.

Some people have found that one or two grits in particular are their favorites, so you can order packs of either 120, 180, 240, 320 or 400 grits. On the [Tools](#) page.

New- glues and adhesives have now been moved to their own page to make pages load faster. You can now find items like Insta-Cure glue and PC- Lumber on the [Glues and Adhesives](#) page.

New by request - brown horsehair. Usually the brown is a variegated mix of shades. On the [Special Effects](#) page.



Thank you! Your purchases made from Arizona Gourds and from our Amazon links enable us to keep these free newsletters and the Gourd Art Enthusiasts site available. **We sincerely appreciate your business.**

Announcement - 2015 AGS Special Artistry Award

The American Gourd Society board has voted to take on responsibility for an annual Artistry award, and it is anticipated that the cash award will be a higher dollar figure for 2015. Entries for 2015 will be limited to those who enter an AGS judged show and receive a Best of Show, a People's Choice award, or are entered in a non-judged Grand Masters division which is typically open only to previous winners of those two awards. Because the award is now be sponsored by the AGS, the artists must be a member of the American Gourd Society to qualify for entry. **The winning entry will receive a substantial cash award.**

*With festivals already having taken place this year, there are already several people eligible to send in their entries. **This is not automatic; artists or show chairmen must submit photos of the qualifying entries for consideration.** Photos of qualifying entries should be sent to the Artistry award committee chair: bonnie@arizonagourds.com.*

Look for more details in the upcoming AGS Gourd Magazine! ENTRIES TO DATE: 0

Feature - Carving burs

There are a lot of choices on the market for carving burs, and it can be overwhelming for most beginners. Here are some simple guidelines to help you choose burs for gourd carving. Similar information is also available on the "[Carving Burs](#)" page on the Arizona Gourds website. I sell only burs that I use myself. There are other brands that also work well, but these are burs that I have tested over many years and I am happy with their performance and value for the dollar. Still other brands work well but are much more expensive; I try to offer the most economically priced burs that do the job well. Beware of inexpensively made sets of burs sold at swap meets and other cut rate places; they are often made in China from poor quality steel and will not stay sharp (or they are dull and ineffective to begin with).

Testing - Take advantage of any opportunity to test burs to see for yourself if you like how they perform. When you go to a class, ask to try different burs and see how they work for yourself. I usually loan burs in classes for people to try, and often they are amazed at how much easier carving is when using burs that are actually designed for woodcarving.

Cleaning - Keep in mind that a bur must be kept clean in order to perform as it was intended. A new, sharp bur will cut much better than an old, dirty one. Use a [brass brush](#) and a bit of solvent like acetone to keep your burs clean, In a pinch, rub the spinning tool against a brass brush for a fast cleanup while in the middle of a carving project.

Sharpness - Burs come in different types of materials, and some stay sharper than others. Carbide burs stay sharp the longest. When buying steel burs, make sure they are called high speed steel (HSS), as these will keep their temper (hardness) and sharpness far longer than inexpensive burs. Diamond burs are not for use on gourd skin. The grit is so fine that often the resins in the gourd skin will clog them and make them impossible to clean. They work great as mini sanders or fine carvers on the inner gourd pulp.

BurType - Take a look at the simple chart to the right, from the "[CraftedinCarhartt](#)" blog. Not every bur is suitable for gourds, and some have only limited uses. Anything with a stone head is intended for grinding metals and hard surfaces. (They are not for sanding gourds!) For gourds, you need something with teeth to carve. Diamonds can be used for sanding and carving gourd pulp, but using them on the gourd skin will clog and ruin them quickly. Gourds are very similar to wood; use burs that are designed for woodcarving.

Bur Shape - Experience and common sense need to be your guide when selecting a shape. If you want to carve a sharp edge, you need a bur with straight sides. If you want to stipple or have rounded edges, you need a round bur. If you want to carve into a tight area, you may need something with a long point. Spend some time playing with different burs just to see what they will do.

Use on inner pulp only, not for use on gourd skin surface!

Not for gourds!

Not for gourds!

Not for gourds!

Not for gourds!

Not for gourds!

Tool Speed - Look at the speed rating on bur packages when possible. Usually they will tell you the maximum speed of operation for optimal performance and safety. For carving burs with teeth - running at full speed on a Dremel type tool is better than running at low speed. The bur will cut more efficiently. However, many micromotor tools run faster than Dremel tools, and the RPMs may be too high. I often run these at a slightly lower speed.

Safety - Please use common sense when using carving tools. Pull your hair back if you have long hair. Nothing hurts more than getting your hair ripped out if it gets tangled in your carver. Wear safety gear - a respirator and eye protection is just the minimum, you may also need ear protection in class situations. Be aware if your tool is on or off before you change burs - sounds silly, but **lack of attention is the biggest cause for accidents**. Check the burs frequently to make sure they are always firmly seated and chucked in tightly in your tool. Because of the sidewas pressure used in carving, burs tend to creep out of the chuck. If this happens, turn off your tool, readjust the bur and tighten. Burs can fly out and injure someone or heavy headed burs may start to wobble and can actually bend the shaft when not inserted far enough into the tool.

Questions? Please feel free to contact me and I will try to help. Take a class from an experienced carver; hands on learning is the best way.

"Like" Arizona Gourds on Facebook to get special offers, up to the minute news about new products and classes, and other gourdng updates. (Just a note - I don't add gourd friends on my personal page save that for family and non-gourdng friends.)

**NEW GROUPS on Facebook - "Gourdng Destash". This is the place to sell your used gourd tools and excess supplies. Also "Gourd Art Sales" - a place to offer your own gourd art c from your collection for sale. No fees to sell on either site! **



Like You, Joan Eerkes and 5,812 ot like this.

Feature - Tips for Understand

When I first started teaching gourd carving classes in the 1990's, 95 the local big box store to buy one the day before class! During this time, I encouraged a lot of them to purchase a hex shaft and a keyless chuck as two must have accessories to make their carving experience more comfortable, since holding a hot motor in your hand for an all day class can become uncomfortable.

Fast forward to today - and I'm now finding that about almost 75% of the students have made a switch to a micromotor tool. This is not surprising, since the age demographic of the typical gourd crafter is the same age group that is starting to suffer from osteoarthritis - myself included! Micromotors have actually been around for a long time, but the earlier models often had much less power and were far more expensive in comparison to a Dremel tool. Depending on the model you purchase, some top of the line models still retail in the \$1000 price range, but now you can purchase a basic one for around \$200

I personally use a [Mastercarver Micro-Pro](#), because after testing a few models, I found this one gave me more torque (power) than some of the less expensive models, and offers more speed than some at 46,000 rpm. It is a good value for the money. I also purchased and use a Freedom portable micromotor, which retails closer to \$300 because of the portability factor. Many other brands are

The Bit Guide

TIPS ON HOW TO DREMEL

Below are the most common trends of the saw blades below showing up in people's bur boxes. These saws are extremely dangerous and should not be used in a hand held rotary carver and especially not by people who are not expert level tool users! Saw blades of this size have a dangerous "kick-back" action and the teeth are large and exposed, and can easily cause severe damage to fingers, faces, and other body parts.

DO NOT BUY OR USE THESE FOR GOURD CARVING!!



CLEANING & POLISHING
can be used with aluminum, ceramic, glass, & mirror



FIBERGLASS CUTTING BITS
Not the RPM on these blades. Do you actually read the RPM max levels on your burs and understand what they mean?



TIPS ON USING A DREMEL:

1. PICK THE RIGHT BIT FOR THE JOB AT HAND.
2. DON'T FORCE IT. LET THE TOOL DO THE WORK.
3. EXPERIMENT ON SCRAP MATERIALS FIRST.

available, including Optima, Ram, NSK and others that are primarily marketed to the wood/jewelry markets. Factors in choosing one should not only be price, but also speed of the handpiece, where the tool is manufactured, reputation for durability and performance, and availability and ease of obtaining repair.

The real cost of a micromotor tool is in the **handpiece** itself - so let's talk about those. Most often you will find handpieces in the 35,000 - 46,000 rpm range. This is much faster than a regular Foredom tool or Dremel tool. With higher speeds, less force is required to cut. This is why people that carve eggshells or engrave glass use high speed tools - they want to carve with a lighter pressure and the high speeds allow them to do that. More about carving pressure

later....

Micromotor handpieces are often sold with a 3/32" collet as the standard option. Part of the reason for this is that micromotors do not have as much torque as heavier duty tools. The manufacturers figured that people using micromotors would be more likely to use small headed burs. However, a lot of people asked for a tool that would accept 1/8" shaft burs, because those burs are offered in far more types and varieties. When buying a micromotor, most gourd carvers will want to ensure that they purchase a unit that has a handpiece with a 1/8" collet so that it will accept the most commonly found burs. Changing burs sizes is easy - micromotor collet adapters are sized in the other standard sizes, 3/32" and 1/16" (dental bur size). You can simply slip a collet adapter into the handpiece and use one of the smaller shaft burs.

*Note - what you can't do with micromotors is use a big variety of drill bits. You will be limited to 1/8", 3/32" and 1/16" drills since there is no other way to adjust the handpiece, unlike a keyless chuck on a Dremel tool. So you may want to keep that old Dremel around, too.

On to the "Box". Most micromotors have a few controls on the box. The first one is the on/off switch. Some people use a foot pedal instead of the switch to operate their machine. It's all a matter of personal choice. Somewhere on the unit will be a switch that allows the tool to operate with a foot pedal. It may say "F" for foot and "H" for hand. If your tool is transported to a class, it is easy to accidentally change the position of that switch and leave you wondering why your carver won't turn on! Be sure to check the switch if the tool won't start.

The next function is a variable speed control. Pay attention to this, because as explained in the carving burs article above, some burs should not be run at the highest speeds. For example, sanding drums and other sanding tools will burn instead of sand if you run them fast. Some tools with very heavy, large heads such as a drum sander, shaping wheel, or some of the larger structured tooth carbide burs will not run well at high speeds, and will develop a dangerous wobble especially if not inserted fully into the handpiece. For these, look at the speed rating on the packaging, and run them at appropriate speeds. Finally, there will be a switch that allows the tool to operate in reverse. Most right handed carvers will rarely need to use this function, but left handed carvers will really appreciate it. *A word of caution - lefties should never operate the tool in reverse when using a bur that has a screw on head. (Example: Shaping wheel) Running it in reverse will literally unscrew the screw, allowing the carving head to loosen and come off.

OK, now back to **speed versus pressure**. Most micromotor tools have an overload setting which will automatically shut down the tool when it is being used in a heavy handed manner or with large headed heavy burs, or too much pressure. If you notice the tool "lugging down" (slowing down during heavy carving) then you need to BACK OFF on the pressure so that the bur is doing the work and not overtaxing the machine by asking it to do too much. Usually, the machine will only need a small amount of time to cool off and work again normally, but doing this over and over again will over time damage the circuitry inside the box. LET THE BUR DO THE WORK. Don't force your tools. Use a light pressure and not only will your tool perform better, your carving will actually be far smoother and better looking.

Some other helpful hints: Your micromotor handpiece is a precision instrument, and as such, it is important to take care of it so you will have years and years of use. Do NOT drop your tool on the ground! Use some care - most tools come with a holster or bench rest to protect your tool. Also, always store a bur in your tool when it is not being used. This will keep dust from getting inside the handpiece. Brush or blow off the dust from the end of the handpiece when changing burs for the same reason. Just use common sense - keep the tool out of the rain, don't drop it when transporting it to classes, and the tool should work fine for a long time. Most people that buy a micromotor find that it is a vast improvement in their carving experience, and they never want to go back to a Dremel after trying one. Happy carving!



Reader's Mailbox

Dear Bonnie, Thank you for the small free gifts that are included in my orders. I appreciate your thoughtfulness! Janice G - NM

Did you know: When shipping

Reader's Mailbox

Hi Bonnie, I finally finished the gourd I started in your class. Thanks again for the encouragement. Kathy Stoeckel - AZ

Reader's Mailbox

Hi Bonnie, I made this gourd with the center of the

costs are low, I either send a partial shipping refund and/or some extra "goodies".

[Shipping Policies](#)

bloom on a stick, and beads glued around the center (which was the inside of the gourd).

Phiny Musgrove - GA



Reader's Mailbox

Hi Bonnie, Just thought I'd pass along to you, with my thanks for the great instructions, my finished piece from your carving class last month. Thank you for teaching me some new techniques that hopefully I will be able to use as I go forward in my gourd art endeavors. I have a long way to go, but feel like I have some of the basics – just need to polish my skills. **Ginny Elm - MN/AZ**

**Ginny did a great job using sponge painting on her class piece!*

Reader's Mailbox

Hi Bonnie, I'll always be grateful for your gourd class last year because it upped my gourd work skills so much. I'll try to get into another one! **Jana Ward - NV**



Tip of the Month: Dye Organization and Label Uses

This month's tip comes from **Barb Larkum of AZ**. Barb not only does gourds, but also does a lot of work with collage and papers, and has used many different kinds of inks and dyes in her work. She has found a handy way to store her dyes and make them easy to use. She uses a plastic tackle box that is segmented and at just the correct height to hold her dye bottles upright. She puts a streak of each dye color on a label, writes the name on the label, and then uses a hole punch to make a small sticky dot to put on the lid of the glue bottle. (The trick is to get the correct lid back on the correct bottle!) If the label comes off, just punch a new one and replace it.



[Deep Tackle Box](#)



On the topic of labels, Susan Broadway posted on the Facebook Gourd Art Sales page that she uses Avery 5663 labels as a more affordable alternative to stick and burn. She says the material is the same, with the only difference is that stick n burn is one solid sheet while the Avery 5663 is a sheet of 10 2x4 labels. The packages come in 10 and 50 sheet boxes, with the larger box averaging in at about a third of the price of stick and burn.



Note: I do not use and have never tried any stick and burn type product, so I can't speak as to the use of these materials. The person who passed along this tip and some other people mentioned that only the laser version is the same. The ink jet version is different and should not be used.



[Avery 5663](#)

Featured Gourd of the Month:

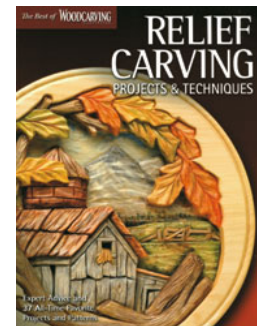
Desert Cottontail

In progress - this is the design being developed for the Fall "Carving with Cutouts" classes.

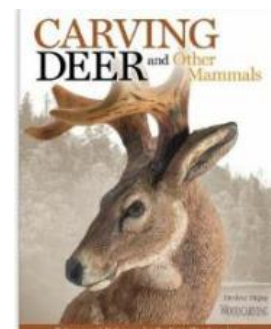
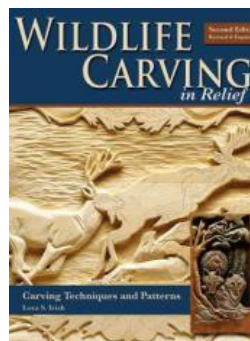
Featured Books:



[Power Carving Manual](#)



[Relief Carving Projects and Techniques](#)



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(Click on book cover for ordering information.)

The first three books are compilations from the editors of Woodcarving Illustrated magazines. There are almost NO books available that deal with power carving, the first book is one of the few. (It is on my bucket list to have enough time to write a power carving book for gourders!)

The last book is available as a pre-order. I posted this because it is written by a terrific carver, Desiree Hanjay.

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



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I often get questions about shipping costs that are added to shopping cart sales. To clarify things, I've added a new page to the website, [Shipping Policies](#).

I am using a no-frills shopping cart program that has limitations and little flexibility. By not paying for expensive software, I can offer you lower prices on the website merchandise. **I'm not looking to make a profit on shipping; if you order lightweight items you will likely get a refund or some freebies to make up for it.** Please take a minute to look at the shipping policies page for clarification and explanation of how things work. If you ever have any questions, please feel free to email me directly. I value your business!

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