



Arizona Gourds

December updates from the desert southwest...

Welcome to the December issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter! Thanks to each and everyone of you for taking the time to visit the Arizona Gourds website during 2007, and for your business and support. I wish all of you a very happy holiday season!

Looking for a special Christmas or birthday gift for a gourd friend? Give them an Arizona Gourds Gift Certificate!

[Buy a Gift Certificate](#)

*****Not getting your newsletter?** Some people have written to ask why they are not receiving their newsletter notice even though they signed up on the email list. Each month I get many addresses that are undeliverable because the message was rejected at the recipient's end. Sometimes it is because your computer security settings are set at a high level; other times it is a decision made by the junk mail filter at the internet service provider level. To ensure you receive your newsletter notice in a timely manner, be sure to add bonniegibson@qwest.net to your "safe senders" list or address book.

Update: Future Classes

March classes will be held at my home in Tucson; dates are not yet set so if you have a request for dates or particular classes, please send me an email. I plan to post new classes later this month.

*If you would like to get notice of classes as soon as they are posted, then 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.



Did you enjoy hearing about our adventures in China in last month's newsletter?

My husband takes some pretty nice photos, and he has loaded photos from China and several other countries we visited on his webshots page.

Click [here](#) to visit his albums (and no laughing at the pictures of ME!!)

A gourd blog One of the students in my recent classes decided to write about her experiences with gourd crafting in her blog. She's also included some great photos. These classes were her first exposure to gourds - click [here](#) to see how things went! (Thanks to Zeborah Loray of Oregon for allowing me to share her experiences.)

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

New! Introducing a newly designed Foredom tool package designed specifically for gourd carvers!

Foredom tools asked for my input to create a new tool package that meets the specific needs of gourd carvers. This new **Kit 5230** package is the result, and it is currently available only through Arizona Gourds!

(This package is so new that a photo of the full kit is not yet available)

Included in this new **Kit 5230** Gourd Carving Kit :

SRM 1/6 HP Variable Speed Bench model tool

- #30 Adjustable 3-jaw chuck handpiece and rubber handpiece grip
- Flexshaft Grease
- Large Rotary Bur holder
- Brass cleaning brush
- 3M Respirator dust mask with exhalation valve
- "Fur, Feathers, & Fins" Instructional Carving DVD

Accessories include:

- 3 carbide typhoon burs, (inverted cone, smooth top cylinder and bur)
- 5 steel engraving burs
- Ball shape steel cutting bur
- Rounded tip Cone shape Vanadium steel cutting bur ("stump bur")
- 2 sanding mandrels (disc and drum styles)



Gourd Carving Kit 5230

Includes tools and accessories with an actual retail value of \$450. Manufacturer's suggested retail price: \$379

Our Price: \$340

Shipping to the continental US via UPS - \$15. *To keep our prices as low as possible on these tools, we ask for payment by check. Please [email me](#) to order.* Please place Christmas orders as soon as possible to ensure timely delivery.

WEBSITE UPDATE: To make each page load faster, I have moved the carving burs and related rotary tool accessories to their own new page. Please stop by the **NEW [carving burs page](#)** and feel free to add it to your list of "favorites" for fast future reference. Other small tools such as rifflers, holesaw sets, glues, sanding sticks, respirators, etc. will remain on the [tools page](#).

Announcing my new signature collection of carbide shaping burs! In addition to the tried and true burs that are shown on the new carving burs page, I am now offering a special collection of specialty burs that will be packaged especially for Arizona Gourds customers and students at my classes. This small collection of burs are pieces I have personally selected to round out my own set of burs. Please note that these are intended as a supplement to your "arsenal", not to replace others you are comfortable using.

*While these burs are made of carbide, they are finer cutting and less aggressive than structured tooth carbides.

Included in this 4 piece set:
80 grit cylinder
60 grit 1/2" hollow tip drum
80 grit 7/16" diameter thick disc bur
80 grit 1/8" pointed bur



The **cylinder shaped bur** is a finer grit than the standard structured tooth carbide bur that is used for more aggressive carving. This cylinder works well for smoothing and flattening edges, small areas, and openings for inlaying stones. The thick **disc shaped bur** is also perfect for smoothing larger flat areas. Use the bottom for smoothing and flattening backgrounds, and use the sides for creating perpendicular edges or borders.

In addition to its typical use as a smoothing drum, the **hollow tip bur** has grit on the ends and will cut decorative circles or plugs. It is a bit coarser than typical sanding drums (and will never wear out!)

The small **pointed bur** can be used to create lines, to undercut areas in deep relief carving, smoothing channels for heishi inlay, or for drilling and shaping decorative holes.

Each of these burs will also be available individually along with a few other selected styles. (Shown at right) See the [carving burs page](#) for more details and for ordering.



*As an introductory special, the first 25 customers that purchase the 4 piece set of carbide burs will receive a set of two FREE high speed steel cutting wheels - a 5 mm wheel and a 3 mm wheel. That's a \$10 value at no extra cost!

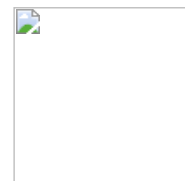
Part Three: Marketing and Promoting Your Gourd Art

In September, we talked about pricing gourds, and in November about where to sell your gourds. This month, we'll touch on different aspects of marketing yourself and your gourd art.

Many artists have difficulty with marketing themselves and their product. There is something about the personality of an artist or their solitary work time that makes them hesitant to go out and say to the world, "Look at ME!!" While being humble and modest is a wonderful character trait, it will not help you when it is time to promote yourself as a member of the selling world. You'll want to treat your gourds the same way as photos of your grandchildren - be proud of them and take the opportunity to show them off! You are not just marketing your gourds; you are marketing yourself.

One way to promote yourself and your art is on the internet. You can pay someone to build a website, or you can build your own with some of the free or inexpensive web building software programs. Your own internet provider probably offers you a limited amount of space at no charge, and with a bit of practice you can use a program such as Front Page to build a small website. However, just building a website won't bring you visitors. You have to create a reason for people to visit those pages, perhaps by buying internet advertising, through word of mouth, or by offering such great content that people return to visit many times. *(In fact, this newsletter is a form of marketing; I hope that if you enjoy reading it each month, perhaps in the future you will keep me in mind when you want to buy supplies!)* It does take a long time and a lot of effort to become established as a presence on the internet.

You can also list things on already established websites that serve many artists; this type of cooperative selling will bring in traffic to view your work and usually has reasonable fees for listing and selling your items. Click on the logo to the right for an example of one type of cooperative website that allows you to buy and sell a variety of crafts. This site is relatively new and has expressed an interest in attracting gourd artists to sell on their site.



You can also promote your art by being visible in your local community. Attend or have booths in local arts and craft fairs, and pass out your business card often. Make your business card eye-catching; a well done card with a photo of your finest art will be retained long after a plain, uninteresting card has been cast aside. Interact with customers when you are at a show. Nothing turns people off quicker than an artist that is more interested in reading a book instead of greeting the potential customer with a friendly smile. Happy customers and positive word of mouth does wonders for sales. Whenever possible, provide a range of products and prices. Remember, the person who can afford the lower priced gourd art today might be the one who purchases the high end creative custom design the next time. Establish a customer base by keeping records of people that have purchased from you in the past. Create a little "About Me & The Gourd" artist brochure on your computer, and let the customer get to know you. If you have a photosite or website, a list of awards, etc. add that to your brochure and let people know more about you and how they can stay in touch with you. If you are doing a show, send a postcard or email notice to your regular customers and let them know if you have something new you think they might want to see. If you provide good customer service and a great product, you are likely to have repeat customers.

If you want to sell in a gallery, put together a nice portfolio with high quality photographs that show your work to the best advantage. A simple binder with large photos inserted into plastic sleeves is sufficient; add newspaper articles that reference your work, awards, or other pertinent information if applicable. Choose photos of pieces that express your own personal style - create a consistent yet distinctive body of work that people will recognize as yours.

It's ok to promote yourself in other ways. Selling your artwork effectively requires time, determination, name recognition and networking. Community news articles, giving free speeches at local groups, donating time to help a childrens after school program, entering contests, etc., can all give you good exposure and a bit of name recognition. Anything to get the word out there about what you do will be helpful. Sometimes this type of work will lead to other, more prestigious opportunities such as being asked to exhibit in a gallery, show or other event.

*Thanks to Kit Gee of Elizabethtown, Pa for her input into this article.

No, it's not a gourd.....



It's an ostrich egg!

Version Two! In [Last December's](#) newsletter, I unveiled an ostrich egg that was carved with my [Turbocarver](#). I thought you might enjoy seeing my second attempt at filigree carving on an eggshell. About once a year, I get the itch to work on a different surface - although there are similarities between an egg shell and a gourd. The main differences are that the egg shell is much thinner, and shells are usually not painted so you have to design it to work well monochromatically. After the egg was complete, it was placed on a small lighted base which sends a beautiful glow through the shell and creates wonderful light patterns at night.

Right: Some bonus "eye candy"! This adorable little gourd house was made by my sister in law, Chris Walton. Years ago I got Chris interested in scale miniatures and she took off with them like crazy! Now she even writes articles for one of the dollhouse miniatures magazines. Lately, I've been trying my best to get her interested in gourds. She's done a wonderful job of using her mini making skills in creating this scene. Many of the added features were made from paper clay. She's added a small mouse Christmas ornament, and some landscaping used for train layouts.

If you want to make your own gourd house, please visit my [project packets page](#) to purchase a copy of the "Gourd Mousehouses" project instructions.



Tip of the Month: Shiva Paintstiks

Recently, one of my gourd buddies, Shelley Fletcher of R2 Designs in Laveen, Arizona called **Shiva® Artist's Paintstiks®**. (You can contact Shelley at laveenfletcher@r2designs.com)

This product is a great alternative to leather dyes, providing transparent color (or more opaque) and is very fade resistant since they are real oil colors. Shiva® Artist's Paintstiks® are refined linseed oil colors solidified into stick form. Unlike tube oil paints, paintstiks dry quickly but have sufficient open time for spreading and blending. They can also be used in conjunction with conventional tube oil paint. There are no unpleasant odors or fumes, and the Artist's Paintstiks are "self-sealing", forming a protective film during storage. They always stay moist and fresh, providing an indefinite shelf life because they reseal in 24 hours. This film is easily removed by peeling it away with a paper towel, or rubbing it off gently. When the stick has begun to wear to the edge of the sleeve, simply loosen the sleeve from the oil stick at the seam, open the sleeve and push the stick forward.

Overall blending on a gourd surface is easy; simply rub the stick on the gourd surface and then blend with a small scrap of old t-shirt type material (which works better than paper towels). Colors can easily be mixed together and blended for interesting effects. Small cosmetic Q-tip type applicators that are available at most beauty supply stores are great for painting on fine details. Just rub a bit of color from the stick onto the applicator and apply to your gourd. This product also works well for coloring drum skins! Paintstiks are available in 51 Professional Colors, 16 Iridescent and 12 Student Colors. They are available as single sticks, packaged as 3 mini sticks, or in a variety of sets.

I've had a chance to play with some of the colors and I look forward to more experimentation. Some of the iridescents produce really great effects. The only drawback I can see is that as with other oil paints, you can't apply acrylics over the top of the paintstiks. Instead, use small makeup applicators or paintbrushes with the paintstiks pigment to paint small areas. Shelley sells these sticks at an excellent price at her Phoenix area classes and at shows, or you can also find them at fine art supply stores.

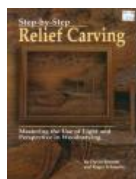


[Shiva Paint Sticks on Amazon.com](#)

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

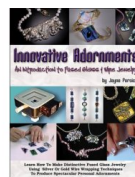
Featured Gourd of the Month: **Eagle Spendor - Reverse Side**

Some people sent me a note and asked to see additional views of the eagle gourd currently shown on my home page. Here are two additional views; the gourd is fully decorated on all sides. (You can see the eagle head view on the home page of my website.)



[Step by Step Relief Carving: Mastering the Use of Light and Perspective in Woodcarving](#)

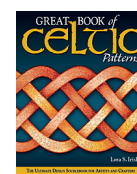
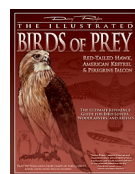
Featured Books of the Month:



[Innovative Adornments by Jane Persico](#)



[Acrylic Revolution by Nancy Reyner](#)





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Arizona Gourds HOME

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

<http://www.arizonagourds.com/Dec07.html>

Not receiving the newsletter? You can join the newsletter mailing list by clicking on the envelope icon. If you are receiving duplicate mailings, or want to unsubscribe from the newsletter list, please send me an [email](#).

Note: It is important that you add bonniegibson@qwest.net to your "safe senders" list, as 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.

[Great Book of Floral Patterns by Lora Irish](#)

[Illustrated Birds of Prey - Ultimate Reference Book](#)

[Great Book of Celtic Patterns by Lora Irish](#)

Here's just a small sampling of some excellent reference books that would be a great present to yourself or other gourd artists. Click on any book cover or title for more information.

**Be sure to visit all these different book pages shown at right to see some of the many other titles that are available. Click on each topic to see a variety of suggested books about each subject.*

- Gourds - General
- Patterns and Designs
- Gourds - Misc.
- Musical Instruments
- Pyrography Books
- Carving Books
- Weaving
- Decorative Painting

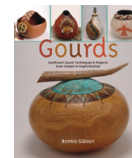
Use this Amazon link to search for other books and merchandise.



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



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