

Arizona Gourds

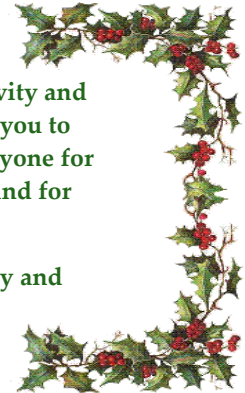
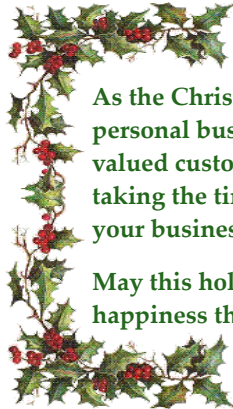
December updates from the desert southwest...



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Printable PDF File

Welcome to the December issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!



As the Christmas season approaches, there is always so much activity and personal business to attend to that it is easy to forget to say thank you to valued customers, like you, for their orders. Many thanks to everyone for taking the time to visit the Arizona Gourds website during 2009, and for your business and support.

May this holiday season bring to you and your family all of the joy and happiness that you deserve.

Looking for a special Christmas gift for a gourd friend or family member?

Give an Amazon.com gift certificate (good for ALL Amazon merchandise)

OR

Give them an Arizona Gourds Gift Certificate!

(Purchase and redeem on our website with Paypal.)

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Update: Gourd Classes

Join me for classes at the second Gourd Retreat at the After Midnight Art Ranch in Sonoita, AZ next April. There will be 5 days of gourd classes, including two with Maria Dellos, author of the book *Gourd Art with Ink Dyes*, and three days of classes with me. The stay-onsite retreat spaces are now full, but there are still some spaces in all of the classes. Register for classes on the [After Midnight website](#). If you need lodging nearby, contact [Linda Hanson](#).

I will be teaching two days of classes next September 11-12th in Cape Cod. This mini retreat is sponsored by Marcia Rothwell and will be held on the grounds of her Bed and Breakfast. There will be some spaces for people to stay on site, or you are welcome to take individual classes and commute or stay nearby in lodgings. You may see photos of the retreat site [here](#). You can also [email Marcia](#) or [contact her at 860-563-8180](#).

Interested? View class details and signup information in this downloadable pdf file.

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

Just Added: New etched Dichroic Glass Cabs. Designs are etched into the glass before the cabochons are fused. Small dragonflies, butterflies, and petroglyphs add to the overall look of the fused glass. *NOTE: The pieces shown here are representative samples only. *Have a color or design request? Send me an [email](#).*
SPECIAL - the first 25 pieces of glass sold this month (limit 5 per customer) will include a free glue on jewelry bail. These make quick, easy and affordable Christmas gifts. Simply glue on the bail, add a simple cord or chain and you have an instant gift! (Larger pieces are the most effective for jewelry.)

*Join the class updates list if you want to receive advance notice of classes. Get the news first and have the best opportunity to select your classes!



[Join The Class updates List](#)

December Sale

This month, **DIAMOND BUR SETS** are **on sale** while the current supply lasts. You'll find them on the [Carving Burs page](#). Diamond Burs are fantastic for sanding,

carving, and texturing
the inner gourd pulp.



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New Turquoise Feather Earrings are on the
[Embellishments page](#).

Great for wearing or for decorating small gourd masks!

December Feature: Claire Cassan's Lacquer Techniques



While at the Texas Gourd Festival in October, I had the pleasure of meeting gourd artist Claire Cassan. Claire is from France, but currently lives in the US and works in the computer industry. She does lovely Japanese finishing techniques on gourds - she is truly a global woman!

Claire showed me some of her finished lacquerware gourds, and they were so smooth and velvety feeling that you just felt compelled to pick them up and rub them against your cheek. Claire has most graciously agreed to share her techniques. If you want to see more work from Claire, please visit her website at www.artisanart.biz/clairecassan/, where you'll find other tutorials from projects taught at their Southeast Texas gourd patch meetings.

The technique described below is a simplified version of an ancient Japanese lacquer-ware technique. The red on black pattern is called 'Negoro', it is achieved by covering several layers of black lacquer by a few layers of red lacquer. Careful sanding of the red layers reveals the black. Associated to the light brown of the gourd shell it gives a very interesting effect.

Before starting this project, be aware that it is very time consuming. It takes several hours for a small gourd, during that time you will paint, let dry, sand, and again several times. What I describe is already very simplified compared to what a Japanese lacquer artisan would do.

Supplies

- A small gourd. Its surface should not be too perfect.
- Sand paper of increasing grit (ex: 220, 320, 400, 600)
- Sanding mask or respirator
- Right Step (J.W's etc) waterbased varnish (Michaels, Hobby Lobby, painting supplies). I chose this brand because it dries quickly
- Pigments: Gamblin brand 'ivory black' and 'indian red' (Dick Blick online store)
- Paper towel
- Clear water based high gloss lacquer
- small cups
- flat synthetic brush
- Latex gloves
- Water, for cleaning

Safety

- Always wear your mask when using the pigments and when sanding
- Clean your hands thoroughly after sanding

Preparation

- Open and clean the inside of your gourd
- Sand the gourd to remove the 'shine'. If the gourd is not sanded the first layer of varnish may not properly adhere to its surface, and peel off later.

Lacquer

Note: The explanation below is for a 'black first, red last' succession of layers. Other colors may be used.

Black base:

- Mix black pigment with the varnish. The consistency must be thick, like pancake batter, without clumps or bubbles
- Apply one layer of varnish on your entire gourd piece. If the varnish has the right consistency the gourd should not show through.
- Let dry.



- Add several layers of black varnish, letting each dry before applying the next. At least 4-5.
- If you do not want the gourd shell to show through at the end, you will need more layers. But, if your gourd has little bumps it is likely that the gourd will still appear when sanding.
- The base coats may be done with black spray high gloss varnish to speed up the process. However, use the same varnish brand/type for both colors, as they may react badly with each other. I have had ok results with *Foggy morning gourd shoppers.*
- The gourd must be completely covered.
- Lightly sand the gourd
- Wipe clean and wash your hands before working on the next color

Red top-coat:

- Mix red pigment with the varnish.
- Apply the red varnish on top of the black, the varnish should be thick enough to cover the black, otherwise you will need many layers.
- Add several layers of red varnish, letting each dry before applying the next.

Sanding:

- Carefully sand, by increasing the grit until the black layers start to appear.
- Use a light touch in slow circle motion
- Stop regularly to check the pattern as it appears:
- Wipe the gourd clean
- The pattern is created by the imperfections on your gourd shell. The red will stay visible in shallow areas, while the black or even the gourd shell will appear in the high spots
- Stop sanding when you are happy with the pattern
- Finish with your finest grit, to smooth the sanding marks if any.
- Add a final coat of clear varnish, spray varnish is fine if it is compatible with the varnish you used for painting. Otherwise just apply the clear varnish used to mix the pigments.



Here are some of Claire's lacquerware technique gourds that have been enhanced with the addition of eggshell mosaic, known as "Rankaku".

These are a couple of jewelry sized pieces I made using Claire's technique.

Travel Report - Indiana Classes

Last month, I traveled to Hobart, Indiana, to teach gourd classes for members of the local patch and for guest attendees from other areas. We had three full days of classes and because everyone was there for all three days, we really got a chance to visit and get to know each other. In fact, it was so much fun for all that I hope to go back again next year! (There are no local scenery photos this time, as my trip was so short that I never really got a chance to see anything in daylight.)

*I also taught classes one day in Surprise, Arizona for their local patch. Are you interested in having me visit your area to teach classes? Please send me an [email](#) and I will send you details of how we can make it happen!



**BONNIE GIBSON'S RETREAT
2009**

Thanks to Ginny Kendig, Kim and Alice Pawlowski for providing some of these photos.



Inlace class photos



New view of the Grand Canyon Gourd on the [Arizona Gourds home page](#).



Follow Arizona Gourds on Facebook and Twitter! I offer occasional specials for my facebook fans.



Gourd shirts, sweatshirts, mugs and other products in 4 different designs available at my Cafe Press store: <http://www.cafepress.com/ArizonaGourds>

Tip of the Month: Alternative Sanding Tools and Dust Collectors

Now that Microlux and Sears have discontinued their popular small sanders, people are searching for some alternatives. Most disc sanders that you'll find at home improvement stores are too large to use with gourds, and yet the disc sanding type works far better on gourds than small orbital or belt type sanders. Here are a few alternatives to consider...

The tool shown to the right is a [right angle grinder handpiece](#) with a small disc sanding attachment that uses 2" diameter hook and loop sanding discs. This small sander is used with an air compressor. If you already own a compressor, this is a reasonably priced alternative; the grinder setup shown here cost about \$30 when purchased on sale. Click on the photo to see a similar grinder at Amazon.



These small sanding mandrels use 3/4" adhesive sanding discs, and are made with a 1/8" shank for small rotary tools. The mandrels should be run at low speeds, as the heat caused by excessive speed and friction

These are found on the [Rotary Tool Accessories](#) page

UPD trans so.



will cause the discs to lose their adhesive tack. (Some people report that they have used a drop of tacky glu or super glue, or have sprayed them with adhesive prior to use to make them stick better.) The mandrels and discs are very inexpensive and are small enough to get into many tight spots! **They will no longer make the large Proxxon transformer. Look for them to be available within 6 months or so.**

A few of the students at the Indiana classes were using portable dust collectors with attached lap boards. If you look at the Indiana photos above, you will notice the person in the lower right photo is using this type of set up. While these collectors make noise similar to vacuum cleaners, they do a good job of reducing the airborne dust so that carving inside is possible. This setup is a bit more powerful than the shop vac setup that was mentioned in the [March 07 newsletter](#). These portable collectors come with large bag and a hose, you would have to make a lap board. Cut a hole in the center of the board and attach the hose on the underside. A piece of screen or mesh is added to the top so the collector will only suck up dust and not tools or small objects. The lap board makes working on gourds easier than if the unit were mounted to a table. Just place the lapboard across your legs and your work will be in the perfect position for carving.

Here are two reasons



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ation including descriptions and costs.

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

Reader's Mailbag

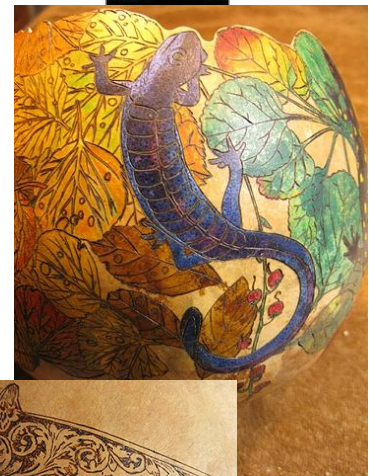
Bonnie, I completed this sculpture called "Harmony" and entered it in South West Art Magazine's "21 over 31" competition. Did not win, but had a great time creating this piece. I used your drum making tutorial for the drummer, it really made a difference on the drum head. (I was the only guy in your advanced carving class in Savannah)
Alan Boggs - Seneca, South Carolina



In the News:

Debbie Wilson of Montana took classes from me when I taught in Boise, Idaho. She sent me the link to this nice [article about her gourd art](#) that appeared in the Missoula newspaper.

*If you are featured in a newspaper article and you'd like to share it with others, please send me the link. I will post them whenever space is available.



Woodburning on gourds by Janice Hill of Colorado

Reader's Mailbag

Hi Bonnie and fans. I'm Yair and I'm creating on gourds I grow in Israel :) Here is a stained and woodburned gourd on a wood base. The text is woodburned and taken from Genesis A, the creation story. The font is Ancient Hebrew called "Rashi". **Yair Blaustein - Israel**





Cardinal and Dogwood gourd done by Phiny Musgrove. She started this in the September Florida Gourd Seminar. I think she did a wonderful job.



John Finger of Iowa made this gourd after reading some of the projects in my "Gourds Book".



patch meeting, and it was beautifully done.

Return of the Mummy?

No, this is a gourd grown in a mold! Peggy Miller of Indiana has been experimenting with growing gourds in molds and has learned a lot from each attempt. This poor baby didn't fully fill the mold cavity.



Featured Gourd of the Month:

"Continuum"

This cannonball gourd has an added lid with a handle made from a chopstick rest. The gourd has coral cabochons and gold leaf accents. The area with gold leaf was undercoated with the lacquerwork technique.

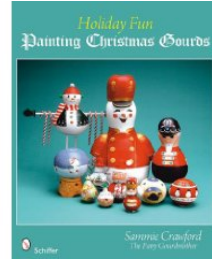


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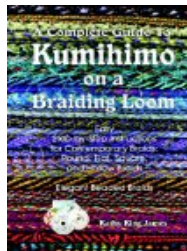
[American Style Magazine](#)



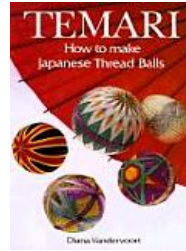
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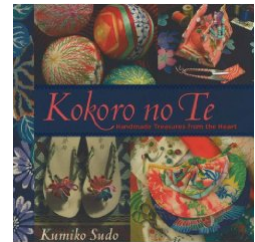
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Something new this month - a magazine. **American Style** is one of my favorite magazines. Each issue is filled with eye candy from artists using many different techniques and media. (I keep the old issues in my guest bathroom and it's hard to get my gourd friends to come back out!)

Just in time for the holidays, you'll enjoy Sammie Crawford's book, **"Painting Christmas Gourds"**. Sammie is known as the Fairy Gourdmother and has other written other gourd books. **Chip Carving** is a good reference/techniques book from the editors of Woodcarving Illustrated magazine. It's intended for carving on wood, but the techniques and designs are similar to how chip carving is done on gourds.

The second row are all books about Japanese crafts, which go well with the lacquerware techniques used by Claire Cassan. Temari balls are a fun project and they make great Christmas ornaments - and they're a great use for buffalo gourds!

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A note about emails:

Many of us have come to rely on email correspondence in our personal and professional lives. However, unlike traditional mail, email has a much greater tendency to become lost without anyone ever knowing it. Email can be sent and simply "disappear" into cyberspace. The worst part is - you won't know it, and neither will anybody else. There are a lot of variables that play into email transmission, including your Internet service provider, your computer anti-virus and spam software, and even your email application. Sometimes we think that as long as we have our own junk mail filters set appropriately then everything will come and go just as we intend it. But once you send an email, it has to pass through several different portals and filters before it reaches its final destination. Not getting the newsletter? **Be sure you have added messages from bonniegibson@qwest.net to your safe sender list.**

If you have sent me an email and have not heard back within a few days, then the chances are I never received your correspondence. Even when traveling, I try to be very diligent with all email communication and I even scan the junk mail filters for legitimate emails that slip by. If you have tried contacting me and have not received a timely response, you may reach me at 1.520.444.8330. Be aware that I am on Mountain Standard time (the correct Tucson time is displayed on my home page) and that I may not answer the phone if I am outside carving gourds, but I will return your call if you leave a message.

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