

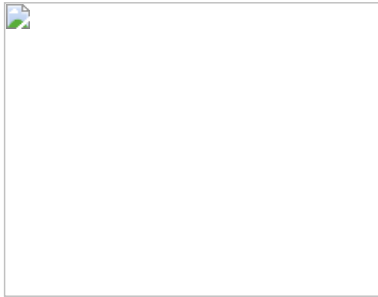


# Arizona Gourds

September updates from the desert southwest...

Welcome to the September issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!

**Gourd Trivia** If you've ever visited Tucson, you may have seen this statue of Father Kino. Father Eusebio Kino was an explorer and a Spanish missionary; he established the beautiful San Xavier del Bac mission. (Below) If you look closely at this statue, you'll notice that Father Kino has a prominent gourd canteen hanging from his saddle!



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

Check out the new **Glass Donuts** on the [Inlay Supplies](#) page - these large glass donuts have foiled metallic accents and each one is different. They would look really nice as an accent piece at the neck of a gourd. You'll find inexpensive [brass brushes](#) on the Tools page - these and a little bit of solvent are great for cleaning carving burs.



### Update: Gourd Classes

Only a few spaces remain in my Thursday **Fused Glass** class in November. (Visit the [Classes](#) page for descriptions of the class.) Please send me an [email](#) if you want to register.



[Join The Class  
updates List](#)

I will be teaching two sessions of the **River Bed Gourd Class** at the "Gourd Retreat - Southern Style" near Savannah, Georgia next January 18-20. Please visit [www.webgourds.com/southern/classes.htm](http://www.webgourds.com/southern/classes.htm) for more information about the Retreat.

### Special Notice!

**I will be away from September 22 to October 18th.** My husband and I are thrilled to have a wonderful opportunity to take a trip to China along with short stops at other nearby countries. This is a once in a lifetime trip; we are making it worth the long flight and spending plenty of time to see lots of things. My housesitter will take care of our house and pets while we are gone, but is not able to handle the Arizona Gourds business. Because of that, **orders will not be sent out while I am away.** I wanted to give everyone enough notice so that if you need something you can place an order the first few weeks of the month before I leave. Also, there will not be an October newsletter. I'll try to make the November issue a good one and will do my best to find some gourds to photograph in China.

## HELP! Gourds are taking over the house, now what do I do?

If you are like most people, you have already inundated your friends, relatives, and co-workers with gourd gifts - and gourds are still taking over your house!

For most people, there will come a time when they start thinking about selling some of their crafted gourds. There are many reasons for this - perhaps a desire to recoup some supply and class fees, perhaps as a way to thin out the "less favorite" pieces, or perhaps just to reduce the numbers of gourds in your home.

There are several things to consider when you decide to sell your crafted gourds. Among them, common questions are "how do I price my gourds", "where do I sell my gourds", "should I sell online (and how do I do that?)" For the next few issues, we'll try to look at some of these questions.

### Part One: Pricing

Pricing your gourd art is going to be as challenging as creating your art. There are no real hard and fast rules or formulas to use; while there are some loose guidelines to follow, the ultimate price you set will depend on many factors.

Here is one simple formula to follow:

Decide how much you would like to be paid per hour. Be realistic - pay yourself at least minimum wage! Keep track of all the time involved, including choosing the gourd, cleaning, carving, painting, etc.

Calculate the total cost of supplies needed to make the gourd. Be sure to figure in a small amount for items such as glue, paints, finishes, etc. that will be used on many gourd pieces. It gets more complicated if you want to create and sell gourds as a living; in that case the price will also have to reflect the cost of overhead items including tools, electricity, display costs, etc.

Next, compare this cost to similar gourds on the market. Visit gourd shows, stores, galleries, etc. to see how your prices compare. Prices will vary greatly by region. If you are fortunate enough to live in an affluent or tourist destination area then you may be able to charge more than if you live in a rural or economically depressed area. Unless you are a truly exceptional artist, your prices need to reflect the local market. Work that is of the finest quality can command higher prices than work that is less well done.

If your price is more than similar gourds, you may need to reduce it by cutting your hourly wage, finding less expensive supplies or by working faster. You can work faster when you are more skilled, or if you make similar pieces over and over again. (Keep in mind that repetitive work may lower the perceived value of the piece and can also lead to boredom and/or burnout.)

If your price is significantly less than similar gourds, you should consider raising your price. Pricing your gourds below value won't necessarily make them sell faster. It seems quirky, but often customers will think a lower priced gourd is inferior and not worth buying when the artist doesn't even value their own work enough to mark it at a reasonable amount.

When pricing, keep in mind where you might consider selling your gourds and what costs that will entail. If you sell a few gourds to friends, neighbors and co-workers, you have no added expenses to consider. However, if you plan on selling at a craft show, you'll not only have to pay for your space, but also allow for your time spent manning your booth, travel costs, costs of table rental, purchase of display items, etc. If you sell at a shop or gallery, those places will take a hefty cut of the final selling price. While at first glance a commission of 30 to 50% of the final selling price might seem outrageous, keep in mind they are covering the expenses of rent, displays, sales help, etc., and they also have the ability to bring in more traffic to see your work. These services are usually well worth the cost of the commission, but you have to factor this expense in when determining your price. If you can't afford to pay this commission, you have probably priced your work too low.

Finally, be a harsh critic of your own work. Quality craftsmanship is important. A little extra time spent cleaning the inside of the gourd, neatness in painting, etc. will greatly affect the price your piece can bring. Artistic originality also adds a premium to the price. A unique, finely crafted piece will sell for much more than a piece that is poorly done or one that appears to have been made on an assembly line.

**Next Month:** Where to sell your finished gourds. The pros and cons of the different venues.

### Just for fun: Top 10 list - You know you are a "Gourdhead" when:

10. You have to explain to the park ranger that you are gathering pine needles for gourds and haven't had a drink in years.
9. You are a member of all the online gourd groups, and every local patch within a 200 mile drive, yet feel like you are missing something.
8. You see a new technique, and can think of nothing else until you get supplies and give it a try.
7. You are out pollinating gourd flowers at night in your PJs, and the neighbors don't think it's unusual.

6. Your idea of shopping is 20 minutes at the grocery store, and 4 hours at the craft store.
5. You've moved into the smaller bedroom, so you have more room to store your gourds.
4. You have to tell UPS guy it's not blood. You just spilled a bottle of red leather dye.
3. Your idea of fun is having the whole family scrub gourds on the weekend.
2. You have a permanent dust mask imprint on the bridge of your nose.



**And the number one reason you know you are a gourdhead:**

1. You talk to your gourds, and they ANSWER you!

\*Thanks to my regular contributor, Scott Nelson, for this great list!

Right: Betty Finch in her "Gourdhead" mask. Betty has other fun and funky gourds on her website [www.bettyfinch.com](#) where you'll also find her fantastic book on Chinese molded gourds.

### Tip of the Month - Portable Power

This month our tip comes from Darienne McAuley of Canada. Darienne travels to places where an electrical outlet is not always handy. She uses a "Power Pack" as portable power for her gourdng tools. She purchased hers from Canadian Tire; in the USA you can get one at discount or hardware stores.

A Powerpack is a rechargeable battery pack which you charge on regular household electrical current, and then can take out into the 'field' to provide power for whatever you want to do. Make certain that the one you buy has a built in inverter (they also come with no built in inverter and then you have to buy a separate inverter) which converts the DC current to AC...so that you can plug in something. They come in a variety of sizes. For instance, you can get one with 1200 watts...or 300 watts. Darienne's is about 600 or 700 watts.

These units are also great for emergency power in case of a power outage. A Powerpack can boost a car battery, inflate tires, some models even have a built in radio. Darienne's has a flashlight function. Keep in mind that the greater the power needed to operate any piece of equipment, the shorter the time the charge will last. It will run a wood burner for a very, very long time, and she feels her purchase was well worth the money. "We have spent many afternoons woodburning beyond the outskirts of Moab, UT, sitting in the high desert under a 300 foot red rock cliff which shaded us nicely. With a thermos of coffee, some chairs and a bowl of water for the pups, we are set. What more can one want?"



[Xantrex XPower Powerpack 400 Plus  
Portable Backup Power Source](#)

Here are two examples of powerpacks. These are listed at competitive prices through Amazon.com. Click on the photos or links to read more about each unit..



[Xantrex 852-2000 XPower Powerpack 600HD  
Portable Backup Power Source](#)

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

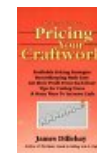
### Featured Gourd of the Month: **Filigree Butterfly**

This gourd has filigree carving around the neck which sets off the Sonoran Blue Butterflies.

### Featured Books of the Month:



[Handmade for Profit:  
Hundreds of Secrets to  
Success in Selling Arts  
and Crafts](#)



[The Basic Guide  
to Pricing Your  
Craftwork](#)

Want to read more about pricing, selling, and the general business of crafts? Here are two books with plenty of information on how to get started.



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

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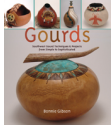


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**Gourds** Southwest Gourd Techniques & Projects from Simple to Sophisticated by Bonnie Gibson



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