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# Arizona Gourds

October updates from the desert southwest...

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### Welcome to the October issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!

Fall is finally in the air - and with it, the return to lots of festivals and gourdng activities! After reading this month's newsletter edition, you will probably be interested in building some sort of gourd musical instrument. I hope you'll enjoy seeing all of the photos and reading the information from all of the great artists that participated this month.

*Right: Chaka Chawasarira of Zimbabwe plays holds the Matepe; a type of mbira which has an interior kalimba in a gourd resonator shell.*



Didn't get a chance to send in your creations? Responses to this article were so great, that we'll continue the feature next month. (If you sent photos but don't see them here, please check the next issue.) You still have time to send in photos - especially those instruments that are unusual or different from those shown this month. Please send your info to [bonnie@arizonagourds.com](mailto:bonnie@arizonagourds.com).

**Notice: I will be out of the shop from September 30th to October 5th, and also October 21st to the 25th. Orders placed during these times will be held and shipped just as soon as possible. Thanks for your orders, and for your patience.**

#### Update: Gourd Classes

**New Tucson Classes are available!** Classes include a **NEW** Mask/Rattle class plus a Basic Power Carving class. These are being offered October 29-31st. Please visit the [Classes page](#) for more information. (\*Classes are almost full - sign up for the class updates list so you don't miss out of future classes.)

Wuertz Festival classes registration begins October 1st. Many classes fill within the first hours, so if you want to sign up for a class please do so early!

It's not to soon to be thinking about attending the 3rd annual **After Midnight Art Ranch Retreat** in Sonoita, Arizona. This has been a popular event the last two years, and due to the small class sizes, has filled quickly each year. For more information, please join the class updates list.

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

  
Join The Class  
updates List

**Running of the Gourds**



FRI - SUN  
February  
4-5-6, 2011

Pinal County  
Fairgrounds  
Casa Grande, AZ

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

**In support of our Musical theme this month, we are offering a blow out special on 16" drum skins!** These are a special closeout purchase and are available in limited quantities.

**September Special #1 - 5 pieces - 16" size drumskins for \$20 - (while they last) - a \$10 discount!**

**To purchase drumskins and kalimba kits, please visit the [Musical Supplies Page](#)**

These are typical ways to use a gourd as a resonator box for a kalimba. These were made with a [kalimba kit](#).

See the article below for an alternate type of kalimba.



**Special Purchases!** Tagua Nuts are also known as "vegetable ivory" Artists carve them and woodburn or do scrimshaw on them. These slices have been polished and are ready to decorate. Ceramic **Scarab beads** are drilled from top to bottom for stringing, but are also great for inlaying into gourds. You'll find both items on the [Embellishments page](#).



You'll love the interesting colors of these Spiny Oyster cabochons. They are available on the [Inlay Supplies page](#).  
(\*Limited quantities on all of these featured items - they will be not be available regularly!)



**New - Turquoise Dyed Stone Donuts**

Two different sizes; these add a striking accent to woven rims or other applications. See penny for size comparison, small pieces are approximately 1 1/4" wide and large pieces are approximately 2" wide. You'll find these on the [Embellishments page](#).

**September Special #2- Orders of at least \$15 in merchandise will receive a FREE Small Turquoise Donut. Orders for \$30 or more will receive a FREE Large Turquoise Donut.**



**New to the site - Weldbond glue** in the handy 2oz size, perfect for your toolbox. Weldbond looks and works like a white glue, but is strong like epoxy! Weldbond and Insta-Cure CA glue are the adhesives I use for almost everything. You'll find both glues on the [Tools page](#).

**New to the site - India Ink based Pitt Artist Brush Tip pens.** These pens are perfect for drawing on gourds. The brush tip lets you draw very fine lines and wider strokes. Best of all, it won't bleed or run when sprayed with finishes! You'll find them on the Kits and Displays page.



\*Chinese Coins back in stock on the [Special Embellishments page](#).

**September Feature - Musical Instruments - Part One**

Musicians around the world have used gourds as natural resonators for their musical instruments. Some cultures have developed amazing instruments using a gourd and simple found objects and pieces made from scrap materials. Contemporary gourd artists are creating beautiful instruments that are also true works of art. Here are a few examples provided by musicians and gourd artists.

N. Scott Robinson is a professional musician that has an extensive website dealing with all kinds of percussive instruments. He kindly granted me permission to share photos and information about some of these unusual "world" instruments. If you would like to see more, I highly recommend a visit to his [website](#). His site has photos as well as short musical samples so you can hear the sound of each instrument.

This instrument is one type of mbira (also generically known as kalimba, thumb piano, sanza and other names.) The mbira is of African origin; the specific instrument names and designs vary by region. Unlike some kalimbas you commonly see made from gourds, this particular instrument is secured inside the gourd resonator with a small soundpost, and is plucked with the thumbs of both hands with the higher pitched keys on the right plucked from underneath by the index finger.

Below: Members of the Kuridza Mbira Project playing the mbira dza vadzimu. Below middle: Chartwell Shorayi Dutiro - mbira dza vadzimu. Below right: David Gweshe - munyonga.





**Barry Sholder - Dallas, Georgia Gourd Banjos**

"I discovered gourd banjos while playing old-time string band music (a kind of mountain music that was a precursor to bluegrass.) Being a banjo player and fiddler I came across music that was played on a banjo using a gourd as the resonator. Thru a little research I found the the origin of the banjo was founded in Africa from an instrument called an Akonting. The akonting was made from a gourd attached to a round neck from a papyrus tree. Three strings were attached with a goat skin stretched across the gourd. Later when brought to America, slaves would get gourds from the field and make banjos.

The banjos that I make are very similar to these early instruments. The banjos are 5 string just like a bluegrass instrument, although my particular banjos are fretless (meaning there are no markings on the neck to tell you where to place your fingers.) When I make a gourd banjo I have to decide what size and shape of gourd to use. A canteen gourd won't slip off your lap when you play, but the sound can be somewhat shallow. I have also made banjos using martin kettle gourd which give you a deeper sound but they are harder to hold. The gourds are usually 8 1/2"-12" in diameter. A 2" sound hole is cut into the side of the gourd because it gives a better bass response. The gourds are covered with goat skin that is applied wet with glue and decorative furniture tacks to hold it tight. To strengthen the gourd I coat the inside with a two-part epoxy coating called glazecoat. This toughens the gourd to deal with string tension. I make the necks, the bridge and tailpiece from exotic woods.

From becoming so interested in gourd art, I am trying to add an artistic feel to my banjos by using contrasting colors on the gourds as well as stains on the wood. You can hear some of my banjos on my [website](#)."

Below: A YouTube video from a different banjo maker showing the



Closeup showing interior during construction. Note sound hole.





Gourd Drums - Here are a variety of gourd drums from different artists.



Jan Jones - Ventura, California



Sharon Miller - Tucson, Arizona



Above: Chris Pawlik - Michigan - Ocean drums



Below: Karen Hundt-Brown - Michigan  
All of the leaves on the drum head and on the drum are pyroengaved.



Left and Below: Jack Thorpe - California  
Instrument on left is an Ipu Heke (Hawaiian percussion instrument)



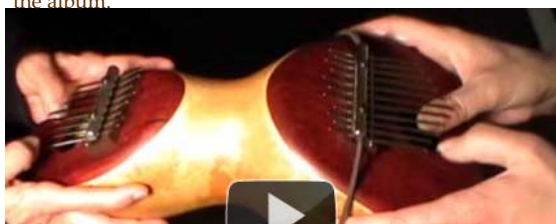
**Jeff Menzies of Ontario, Canada** holds a Master of Fine Arts degree and teaches at the Ontario College of Art and Design. His instruments are artistic and unusual. Jeff does not use templates, but instead uses the gourd to determine much of the design work in the wood working. He uses mostly domestic woods, and has made over 200 banjos. In addition to teaching others how to make instruments, he also works on a commission basis, making gourd fiddles, gourd cellos, gourd up right basses, gourd ukuleles and every style of banjo you can think of. Jeff says that banjo making is an extension of his sculptural practice. You can see more about Jeff



Jeff Menzies gourd banjo, accompanied by fiddle and guitar.

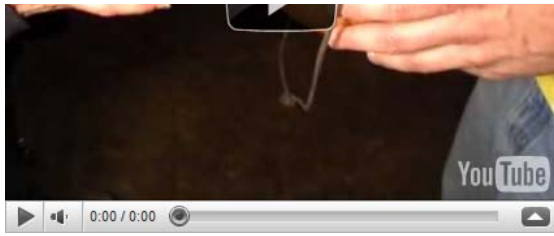


**Mark Holdaway of Tucson, Arizona** is a fabulous kalimba musician. I own his album, "Two Thumbs Up" and it is really great. On the YouTube video below, he and his wife play a duet on a double ended kalimba made from a bottle gourd. If you click on the album cover to the right, it will take you to a page where you can hear some samples or order the album.



**Gary Devine of Ontario, Canada**, made this wonderful kalimba which is heavily carved and has a lot of Inlance inlay. He used a basic [kalimba kit](#) and a thick canteen gourd for the resonator.





Click on the play button to the left to hear some great kalimba music.

### Michigan Gourd Festival

The Michigan Gourd festival was sponsored by the "Michigourders", one of the Michigan gourd patches. This event was held in support of the Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation - all profits were donated to this good cause. Deb Stallings and her crew of volunteers did an amazing job bringing the event together, and they hope that this is the first of many festivals. The festival attracted over 1100 attendees, despite a bit of rainy weather (no true gourder would ever let a bit of rain keep them away!) People came from many of the surrounding states and there was a large Canadian contingent on hand. Classes were held all three days of the festival, as well as a competition.

We had a wonderful time at the festival, and enjoyed meeting new people and visiting with long time friends. Thanks to everyone that made this such a great event.



Karen Hundt-Brown shows her enthusiasm for gourds! Thanks to Jacqui Wells for this and several other photos.



Inside the vendor building. Classes were in different buildings; raw gourds, produce and food booths were outdoors. Wonderful musical entertainment and a gourd car race were held in a separate building.



The Gourd Artist's Guild's ("AKA John Stacy's Gourdpatch group) gourd quilt was on display. You may recognize this from the Beyond the Basics:

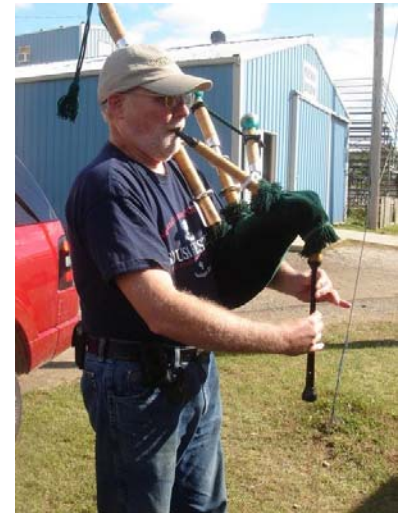


There were plenty of Halloween themed pumpkins and gourds - The piece above is shown in regular light and also how it appears when lit

Gourd Art book. I am honored to be one of the participating artists that created these gourd tiles.



Competition pieces - Above: this LARGE gourd made a nice cat bed! Below: Best of show was awarded to Gary Devine's Leopard gourd.



Fred Rogers played his gourd bagpipes several times during the festival. The instrument sounded great! Look for more on Fred's bagpipes in next month's newsletter.



Inlace class is making sample sticks to take home.



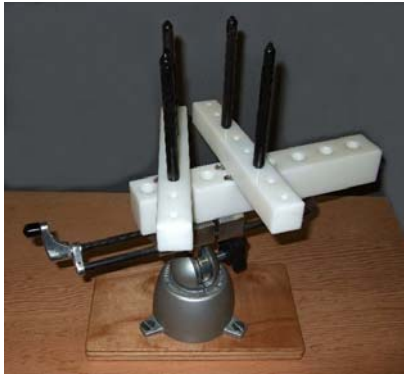
The [Gourd Art Enthusiasts site](#) continues to grow! We now have 1350 members and close to 4500 gourd photos to inspire you. Membership is free and easy. The site also has state groups, event listings, a Q&A forum and a chat feature if you need an quick answer to a gourdine question! [Check out our two great new GAE T-Shirt designs!](#)



[gourd questions](#) [click on our no question site & email designs](#)



### Product Review : Grip All Jaws



I've recently played with new gourd tool, the "Grip All Jaws". I had heard from people that tried it at the Washington gourd festival that they really liked it, so I was glad to give it a workout.

The first thing that I noticed was that the tool was made from high quality parts and the instructions for assembly were clear and easy to follow. That's always a good thing! The tool is designed around a Panavise base - this base is an extremely well made and a versatile tool in itself. The jaws are attached to the Panavise base, and then the unit is clamped (or screwed onto) your work surface. The head of the Panavise is an 360° orbital ball joint, and will turn in any direction. This means that the Grip all Jaws may adjusted to an infinite number of positions to place your work in just the right angle. You can see this in operation in the photos below.

The jaws have rubber coated posts that may be placed in many different positions along the pivoting jaw heads. This way, the Grip All Jaws accomodate just about any size or shape of gourd (max width is 14") and hold it snugly in place. The rubber coating prevents marring of the gourd and also grasps the surface firmly at the same time. You can even place the posts inside the gourd to hold it if necessary. The grip is firm but gentle enough to protect fragile items.

I found that the most useful function of the tool was for operations where two hands would be needed, and for people that suffer from arthritis and have trouble gripping things firmly. The Grip all Jaws held the gourd securely so I could use two hands on a drill while cleaning out the interior. Some people might find this setup useful while carving or woodburning intricate detail.



I am a creature of habit and of many years of experience, and have to admit I still prefer holding the gourd in my lap while I carve. My style of carving is such that I often rotate the gourd continuously as I work instead of moving the rotary tool. However, I can see using this tool for cleaning gourds, sawing intricate cuts, and for other applications that require two hands or a steady surface at an unusual angle. I suspect that I will find several other uses for it in many of my other hobbies, such as egg carving, woodcarving and scrimshaw.

If you are interested in purchasing this tool, or just want more information, send me a note at [bonnie@arizonagourds.com](mailto:bonnie@arizonagourds.com). I'll be glad to answer your questions.

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

### Featured Gourd of the Month:

#### Starry Skies

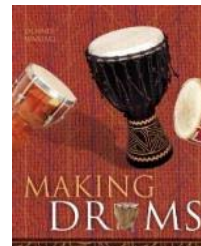
This gourd was started as a demo piece so it has a few different techniques! The piece has filigree, inlaid turquoise, added scarab beads and a woven pygmy palm frond top.



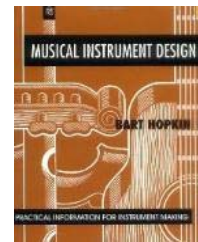
### Featured Books of the Month:



[Making Gourd Musical Instruments](#)



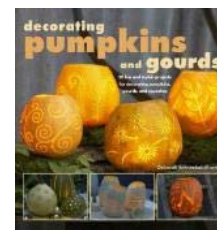
[Making Drums](#)



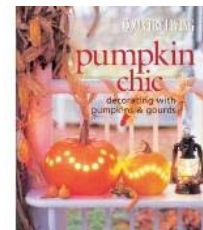
[Musical Instrument Design](#)



[Out of His Gourd \(Music\)](#)



[Decorating Pumpkins and Gourds](#)



[Pumpkin Chic - Decorating with Pumpkins and Gourds](#)

*Making Gourd Musical Instruments is the most comprehensive book on*



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<http://www.arizonagourds.com/Oct2010.html>

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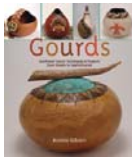
**Note: It is important that you add [Bonnie@ArizonaGourds.com](mailto:Bonnie@ArizonaGourds.com) to your "safe senders" list, as many emails bounce each month due to spam blockers.**

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.



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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](#)

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**Making Gourd Musical Instruments** is the most comprehensive book on this topic, and it is specifically written for gourd crafters. There is plenty of great historical information as well as instruction on making things from gourds including guiros, shekeres and more.

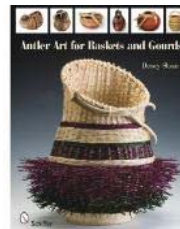
Although **Making Drums** and **Musical Instrument** design were not written specifically for gourders, the information in them is very helpful. Making Drums has information on construction of drums that I've found very helpful - it's a great reference book and one of the first books I bought.

**Out of his Gourd** (music) is a fun album if you want to hear someone make a gourd sound good!

The last two titles are fun ideas for the fall, and most of the things you can do with pumpkins, you can also do with gourds for a more permanent project. I still have a gourd jack-o-lantern that gets used every year!



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[Antler Art for Baskets and Gourds](#)



[Weaving on Gourds](#)

Upcoming new releases.  
*Weaving on Gourds* is scheduled for release on October 8th, *Antler Art for Baskets and Gourds* is scheduled for release on December 28th.

*\*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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