



# Arizona Gourds

August updates from the desert southwest...

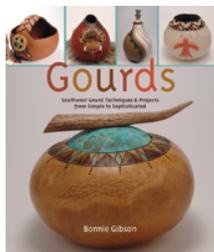
Welcome to the August issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter. Please feel free to write me if you have any suggestions for future newsletters or feedback on this issue.

## Update: Gourd Classes

I will be teaching gourd classes at the [Ohio](#) and [New Mexico](#) gourd festivals. The Ohio classes will be held September 29th, 30th, and Oct. 1st. The New Mexico classes will be held Oct. 12th and 13th. I will be teaching "Power Carving" and "Petroglyphs and Ripples" at both festivals. See their websites for registration and more information.

I have also added some classes for late October that will be held at my home in Tucson. [Click HERE](#) for details

**What's new on the [Arizona Gourds](#) website?** A few new items have been added and lots of items have been restocked. The newest items are 10" wooden stands on the [Kits and Displays](#) page. This new larger size will accommodate those larger gourds. On the [Special Effects](#) page you'll find a new supply of feathered and beaded cabochons. These are great for quick and easy gourd projects - they add a dramatic effect without much time or effort. I've also added sanding sticks to the [Tools](#) page. These are fantastic for smoothing background areas and sanding corners and other hard to reach areas.



**Book Update:** Latest word on my book is that the release date is still sometime late 2006. The book will be 160 pages and in full color, and will include 22 projects as well as basic chapters on tools, materials and techniques. Skill level is indicated for each project, and even if you don't make each one, you will enjoy learning about new materials and techniques in each one. Lots of ideas are suggested for making each project your own unique creation. [Click here](#) to find out how to preorder your autographed copy. The first 500 will be numbered and personalized. I will also include a special mini project (that is not in the book or on my website) with all preorders.



**Featured Item:** The featured item this month is [Drum Skins](#), and when you see the wonderful Irish Drum tutorial (Below) by Babette Metheny you'll understand why! Mention this offer in an email when ordering a drum skin, and I'll throw in a mini jewelry sized drum skin at no charge.

## Tutorial: Making an Irish Drum

by Babette Metheny

This month I'd like to introduce you to a relatively new gourd enthusiast. She may be a "beginner" but her work is already very nice quality and we'll be seeing more fine pieces from her in the future. I'm pleased that she has agreed to allow me to share her "Irish Drum" tutorial this month. If you'd like to respond to her directly, she can be contacted at [bmeth526@yahoo.com](mailto:bmeth526@yahoo.com).

*Ed. Note: The traditional Irish drum is known as a "Bodhran". They typically have one or two wooden cross pieces inside the drum frame that are used for holding the instrument while playing. A double ended beater called a "Tipper" is used to play the drum.*

**Drum Base** - Start out with a heavy, thick canteen gourd. Your drum base needs to be between 3 1/2 to 4 inches from top to bottom. Measure from the middle of the gourd up and down, then mark your circle on the top and bottom. The size of the circle will depend on the size of the gourd. I use a Tupperware bowl to mark my circles. Make sure the base is the same width all the way around or your drum will look lopsided. Next dye or paint your base, or leave it natural. I dye mine, inside and outside, several coats. **Varnish** - Use an interior/exterior varnish and apply to the inside, outside and around the rims. You'll need to apply a minimum of 3 coats for stability and also to keep the gourd from warping when you apply the skin. Let each coat dry well before applying another.



Gourd drum frames - cut, dyed and varnished

**Top** - Next decide which side will be your top then measure down 1 inch and place a dot. Go all the way around with a 1-inch space in between. Then drill a hole at each dot. I try to keep the holes as small as possible. You want it big enough to get a large eye needle through.

**Handle** - I use a 5/8 dowel to make the handle. It will sit inside the bottom of the drum so when you measure take that into account. Once you cut your handle to fit, place it into the drum base and draw around each end on the gourd (easier to drill your screw holes). Next drill a small pilot hole into each end of the dowel then drill a pilot through the drum. Next paint the handle before attaching, when dry attach the handle using small screws (size will depend on thickness of gourd). I paint or color over the screws so they aren't so noticeable. Once the handle is attached varnish it also.



Wooden crosspiece attached to the interior of the gourd shell. Note the stitching row.



Damp drum skin has been stitched to the gourd shell.

**Skin** - Soak the skin and lay over the top so it hangs evenly all the way around. I use artificial sinew or waxed linen thread (something strong that won't stretch). I tie a disc bead to the end of the thread. Make the thread to be long enough to go all the way around the drum twice. Start by pulling the thread from the inside out through the hole and skin then go back through the next hole and so forth till you get back to the start hole. Pull the skin taught but not tight as you go around. Once back to the start hole you're going to sew around again but filling in the empty space. You don't want to see any space between the thread when done. The skin will pucker a little just try and smooth it as much as possible. When you're done sewing tie off the thread on a neighbor stitch or using the disc bead. I pull mine to the outside and tie off of the stitch next to it. Then set it aside and let it dry overnight (don't mess with it while it is wet or the skin will stretch and you'll have a bad sounding drum). When the drum is dry test out the sound all over. If you have a dead area or the skin isn't tight enough, take a wet cloth and wet the area or areas and let it dry again. This will tighten up the skin and improve the sound.

**Trim** - Once the skin is dry take a sharp pair of scissors and trim the skin close to the thread line. I use twill tape to cover the thread line, it comes in several colors and is easy to work with. I also use regular thumbtacks with the tape. You want to center the twill tape over the thread line, I try to use the holes I drilled for sewing to place my tacks. Use a craft glue to glue down the tape and then add a tack to every other hole. The tape will gap a little in places because of the skin and the curve of the drum. Once the glue is dry you can go back and re-glue the gaps.

**The Beater** - You'll need two 1" dowel caps and a 3/8" dowel. Check the hole size on the dowel caps to make sure of the size of the dowel that you'll need. Cut the dowel a little shorter than the inside width of your drum face. Don't forget to include the added length of the caps. Then glue the caps to each end of the dowel and let dry. Sand down any rough areas, as you don't want to puncture or rip your drum skin. Next paint and varnish.





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Would you like to see your tip or tutorial featured here? Please [contact me](#).

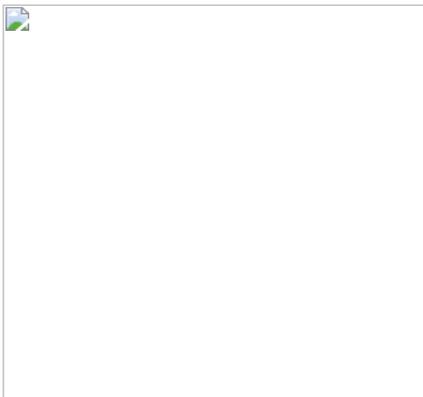
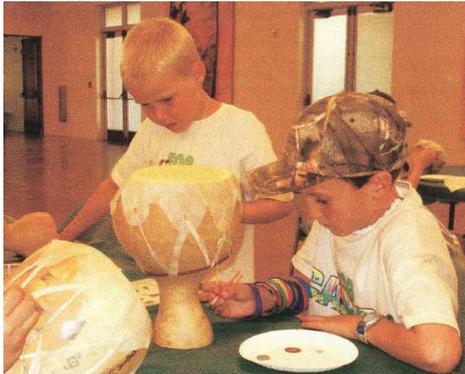
### In the news: Gourd drums are a hit with Phoenix area kids!

What's it like to have 60 some kids make their own gourd drum, then play them with professional musicians? Absolutely awesome! At this summer's two Survivor Eco-Camps at the Phoenix Desert Botanical Garden kids did just this. With help of adult and teen volunteers each child made and decorated their own gourd drum.

Their creativity inspired all the adults. Then later in the week professional drummers taught them to play. The kids were so proud and the energy level in the room was an electric high.

*\*Thanks to the Wuerz Gourd Farm and Arizona Gourds for providing the gourds and drum skins at a special price.*

Thanks to Paula Gregg for submitting the writeup and photos!



### Tip of the Month:

#### Do your eyeglasses fog up when you are wearing a dust mask?

Always wear a dust mask or respirator when working on gourds, especially when cleaning the insides, carving or other dusty operations. Make sure the mask you select is actually rated for exposure to dust. Avoid "comfort masks", as these do not provide adequate protection. If your glasses fog up, try a good quality disposable respirator/dust mask with an exhalation valve. Your warm, moist breath will flow out of the mask through the valve instead of

around the top edge of the mask. You can see an example of a mask with a respirator at the bottom of the ["Tools"](#) page. For best results, make sure that the metal nose piece is bent to fit firmly around your nose. Criss cross the two elastic straps so that the bottom strap is placed toward the top of your head and the top strap is behind your head. This will give you a good seal and the best protection.

Featured Book of the Month:



Featured Gourd of the Month:  
*Butterfly Grove*

Carved, dichroic glass inlay, added butterfly made from gourd shards.



[Making Drums](#)  
By Dennis Waring



Want to try making a different style of drum? This book is presented in full color and has tons of information about all kinds of drums and how to make them. You'll learn about the origin of various drums and the cultures that developed and use them. Best of all, you'll learn how to make many styles of drums, including many that are perfect for gourds.

This one is so good I even bought a copy for myself!



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