



Arizona Gourds

February updates from the desert southwest...

Welcome to the February issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!

I had a wonderful time at the Southern Gourd Retreat just outside of Savannah, Georgia. I really enjoyed meeting many of my online friends in person for the first time, and meeting new friends! Everyone there made my husband and I feel so welcome that I can't wait to go back again sometime! (Look for some photos further below in this issue.)

Special Notice: I will be attending the Wurtz Gourd Festival from January 31-February 3rd. Orders placed during this time will be held and shipped on February 4th. (All orders will be filled in the order they are received.) If you will be at the festival, stop by to say hello. My booth will be at space D8, (the same location as previous years.) I'll also be there on Thursday the 31st to teach classes and will have different tools and supplies available at my class location as well as one of the new Freedom Gourd Carving Kits for you to see.

My next gourd trip will be to attend the Leiser Festival just outside of Sacramento, California. That event will be held May 17-18th. I will be teaching classes at the festival. Please visit the [Folsom Gourd Arts](#) site for registration information.

Update: Gourd Classes

New gourd classes have been added to the March schedule, including a new "Buffalo Robe" gourd class and an Advanced Wildlife Carving class that I team teach with Phyllis Sickles. Please visit the "[Classes](#)" page for more information about each class. If you wish to sign up, please send me an email. Registrations will be accepted on a first come, first served basis. You must pay for your class as soon as possible in order to hold your space. Once the class lists are full, unpaid registrations will not be held.

*To get notice of classes as soon as they are posted, 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.



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updates List](#)

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

New Additions to the Arizona Gourds site: Visit the [Special Embellishments](#) page to find NEW 2mm round leather in a natural tan colored leather, and beautiful new feathered strips with beaded cabochons. New Insta-Cure Glue accelerator and replacement glue tips are located on the [tools](#) page.



February Feature: Learning new techniques - Gourd Classes

Lots of people have told me that while they enjoy books about gourds, they prefer to take classes. Some people just don't learn well from written material, but do very well in a class because they can see things as they happen, ask questions, and get hands-on assistance as they work.

If you live in a rural area or a part of the country where gourds are not as commonly found, you may have a hard time finding gourd classes. One of the first places to check for instructors is through your local parks and recreation groups, community colleges, or at art exhibits at county fairs. Often there are other gourd enthusiasts that might also be looking for others to share the hobby in their community. If your state has a gourd society, check their website and find out if they have leads to instructors in your area. It's easy to find your state society (if your state has one) by visiting the chapter pages linked from the [American Gourd Society](#) website.

Another option is to take classes from DVDs or tapes. This is not quite the same as taking a class in person, but does offer more visual information for those that learn better that way. It has the advantage of allowing you to replay sections or to stop the picture when you want to examine something a bit longer. One drawback is that sometimes these videos can be expensive, but a gourd club might consider purchasing a few and adding them to their library. These can be shown at meetings or checked out so members can view them at their convenience.

Another option for those in remote areas is online classes. Some online classes provide instructions that you print out and a forum where you can chat with others in the class. Others may be more in-depth classes that offer things like live video feed. These may or may not allow for interaction with the instructor. Here is an example of one site that offers online classes. Be sure to visit their links page for more resources: www.thatcreativeplace.com

*On a personal note, I hope to offer more [project packets](#) (including filigree carving!) and some online classes in the future.

Still, one of the best ways to learn is to take classes in person. If you ever have the opportunity to attend a gourd festival, that is a fantastic opportunity to take classes and enjoy the benefits of a festival at the same time. Most festivals offer a wide range of instructors and subject matter. Prices vary greatly depending on the instructor, cost of materials involved, length of class and other factors. You may also take classes that are offered through your local gourd group. Some groups pool their funds and pay to bring in an occasional workshop instructor. This opportunity alone may make the cost of membership well worth the price.

Selecting a teacher and choosing a class might be the most difficult part of your experience. Read the class descriptions throughly to see if the technique or project sounds interesting. Find out what materials are included and what you'll be expected to provide. What is the length of the class and how many are in the class? Does the cost sound reasonable for what you will learn? (Remember that some instructors may be traveling from a long distance and this may affect the cost of the class.) These are just some things to think about as you decide.

Look at examples of the instructor's completed work to see their level of expertise. For example, if they are teaching painting, they should demonstrate a high level of skill in painting techniques. Do you like their class examples and their style? Have they won any awards or ribbons? Do they have credentials or certifications from painting organizations? Will the teacher really offer you good instruction or is the class designed merely to sell you an expensive new line of paint? A good instructor is more likely to provide handouts, supplemental materials or resources, and **the knowledge to complete additional similar projects**. Ask friends that have taken classes in the past which ones they enjoyed the most or learned the most from.

Remember that in addition to learning, you are at classes to have a great time. Have fun!

At the Southern Gourd Retreat: What a fantastic time! Charlotte Durrence of Georgia and Faye Davis from South Carolina did a fantastic job hosting this event. I really got spoiled with great Southern hospitality and good food! The retreat center was in a beautiful location and a wonderful place to hold the event. I enjoyed seeing the area and even found some time to take a couple of walks in the woods and to gather lovely long pine needles from Charlotte's yard.

Right: This photo was taken at a special two day pre-retreat seminar. I am tentatively planning on a similar seminar to be held in Florida next September.



Some beautiful scenery from the grounds of the New Ebenezer retreat center where gourd classes were held.



Louise Horesovsky (center) baked me this wonderful "Gibson Lemon Ripple Cake" to commemorate a long day of carving sand ripples. She even added a fetish bear and a carved cake feather! Charlotte Durrence (right) and her husband Derral were fantastic hosts while we stayed at their home.

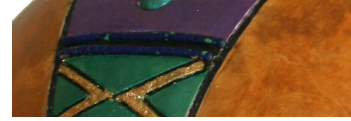
Class Photo Gallery: Please contact me to see your work pictured in the gallery and I'll select a few to share your work.



done by some of my students in a class from me in the past and I'll select a few to share.



Right: Carol learned how to carve and a small boat.



Left: Darla Hines of Magnolia, Texas has attended several of my carving classes. She completed these gourds after taking the Faux Basketry and Filigree Carving classes. She used patina paints on the gourd lid.

Tip of the Month: Repairing cracks, flaws and broken gourds

It is frustrating to pick up a beautiful gourd only to discover that it has an insect hole, stress crack or other flaw. It's even more frustrating to drop a half finished gourd and discover that it is broken! If the damage is severe, you may not be able to complete the project exactly as intended; but almost any break can be repaired or at least disguised so you can salvage the gourd.

Small insect holes can be easily filled with wood putty, but cracks will require a bit more work to fix. Drill a small hole at the far ends of the crack before repairing. This hole will prevent the crack from spreading further. Next, add some glue to the crack. You can use wood glue, Weldbond or a gap filling super glue, but you'll want to force the glue thoroughly into all areas of the crack. Once the crack is full, force some gourd dust into the glue mixture. This will make the crack less noticeable after it is sanded. You may have clamp the repair with some masking tape or duct tape while the glue dries. The closer together you can bring the edges of the crack, the better the repair will look.



Another option for broken gourds is to turn the crack into part of the design. I've seen some really beautiful gourds where a crack was decoratively laced. Sometimes you can cut an unusual shaped opening in the gourd to remove a cracked area. You can disguise some soft pitted areas by carving and adding stone or resin inlays.

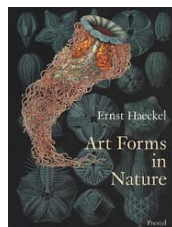
Weldbond is available from [Amazon](#) or at hardware stores, and Insta-Cure gap filling super glue is available at the bottom of the [Tools](#) page.

When a fragile gourd piece near the top edge or at a cutout area is broken, it can be repaired so it is even stronger than the original gourd. Use a couple of small dowels pins made from toothpicks, paper clips pieces, bamboo skewers, or whatever seems the right size and strength for the job. Use at least two dowels to hold the repair. Drill small holes into the edge of the broken piece, and insert the dowels. Snip them off so they protrude about 1/4", and then glue them into place. Carefully line the pieces up as closely as possible and make small pencil marks where the protruding dowels touch the connecting gourd section. Drill holes to match, then test fit to see how the pieces line up. Once you are satisfied with the fit, you can glue the whole thing together and use some tape to clamp the repair in place while the glue cures. This will make a very strong joint which can be sanded and smoothed after it is completely dry.

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

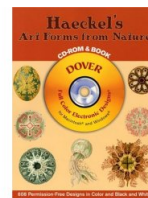
Featured Gourd of the Month: *Plains Indian Robe*

This gourd is an example from an upcoming new [class](#). The gourd has inset beaded rosettes and faux beadwork. A leather like paint finish and robe pictographs are added.

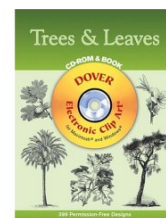


[Art Forms in Nature](#)

Featured Books of the Month:



[Art Forms from](#)



[Trees & Leaves](#)

[Nature](#)

The two books on the left have fabulous art work from Ernst Haeckel, a post Darwin scientist who brought together knowledge and artistic skill to create drawings that are both technically accurate and artfully done. Trees and Leaves is another great reference book from Dover Art.

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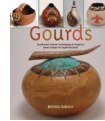
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Note: It is important that you add bonniegibson@qwest.net to your "safe senders" list, as many emails bounce each month due to spam blockers.

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.

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



**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.*

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