

Arizona Gourds

June updates from the desert southwest...

Welcome to the June issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!

This issue marks the second anniversary of the Arizona Gourds newsletter.

Thanks to all of you for taking the time to visit each month. The newsletter is a fun way for me to thank all the great gourd friends I've made over the years. I also want to thank those of you that support my site by purchasing supplies, tools and other gourd crafting items. Your business is greatly appreciated.

Making the trip to the Welburn Gourd Festival?

The Welburn Gourd Festival will be held on June 21-22nd, in Fallbrook, California. **I will be away to teach classes and attend the festival. Orders that are placed from June 15-23rd will be shipped on the 24th when I return.** I will not have a booth at the festival this year, but will be teaching classes on Wednesday through Sunday at the festival grounds. I will have some tools, supplies, and some autographed books available for purchase, so stop by if you want to pick up some items and save on shipping. You may want to send me an email list if you have specific requests, as I won't be bringing all my stock.

Update: Gourd Classes

Upcoming events: My Welburn's classes filled very quickly, but there is still a last opportunity to take a class from me in Southern California! **On June 16th I will be teaching the "Buffalo Robe" and the "Faux Basketry" classes in Costa Mesa, CA in conjunction with the Orange County gourd patch. If you are interested or want to register, please visit the [OC Gourd Patch webpage](#).** (I probably won't be returning to teach in California for the next few years, so hope to see you at these classes.)

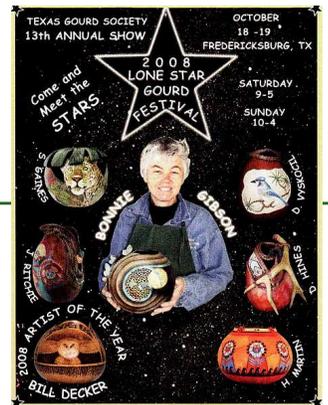
My Florida Gourd Seminar classes are now posted! These are special Pre-Retreat Power Carving workshops on September 17th and 18th, that I'll be conducting prior to the Florida Gourd Retreat. I'll also be teaching shorter classes at the weekend Retreat. Please visit the [Florida Gourd Society](#) page for more information.

*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.



[Join The Class updates List](#)

My classes at the [Texas Gourd Festival](#) (October 17 - 19th) are now posted. Please visit their site to register.



Updates:

Gourd Show:

I am participating in the **Southwest Fine Art Gourd Show** at the Kerr Arts and Cultural Center, (Kerrville, Texas) which is ongoing from May 22nd to July 6th. This show features many great gourd artists and is a wonderful display. If you are traveling to that area, please stop by to check out the show! You can read more about the Kerr Art Center and the show at www.kackerrville.com

Gourd Trivia

In April, I wrote about a Chinese film, "The Magic Gourd", a 2007 children's film that is a combination of live action and computer animation. Since that time, I have had the pleasure of watching this movie in Chinese, and found it to be a fun experience. Even though I couldn't understand any of the words, the story was simple enough to come across clearly and that allowed me to just enjoy the fun computer generated gourd effects. (It was a bit disconcerting to see the gourd cross his arms between his eyes and mouth - and it looked funny that his shirts ended just above his mouth!)

This film was released in Mandarin Chinese, and before now, was not available in the US. **Good news** - now the movie is available with English subtitles. This disc is a digital file that can be played on your computer. (It is not a DVD, and will not work in a TV DVD player.) The movie may be ordered from [The China Shop](#)



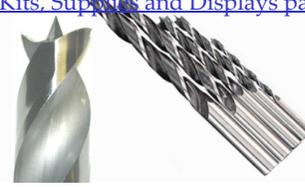
What's new on the [Arizona Gourds website?](#)

Now Available: **Black Makin's Clay**



Makin's is non-toxic, water based, and acid free when dry. The perfect air dry clay for maskmaking, it works great for adding feathers quickly and to adjust their positions easily. You have plenty of time to work and make changes before the clay hardens completely. The black color is better than white or other colors as the clay will be unnoticeable even when there are small gaps between the feathers. Unlike Model Magic, this product will dry hard, not spongy. Look for Makin's clay on the [Kits, Supplies and Displays page](#).

New [5 piece brad point drill bit sets](#), perfect for accurate drilling. Same great burs, but now available in a smaller set, and for a couple of dollars less. These are found on the [Tools](#) page.



The Dremel Flex shaft tool is a great addition to your Dremel tool. The ergonomic handpiece makes it possible to carve for a longer time without hand fatigue. For use on models 275, 285, 395, 398, 780 and 800. Includes a square collet drive nut. They are easy to attach and use. Simply remove all collets and the black plastic endpiece from the end of the Dremel tool. Screw on the square collet drive nut, then insert the flexshaft and screw it directly onto the end of the Dremel tool. You can order one on the [Tools page](#).

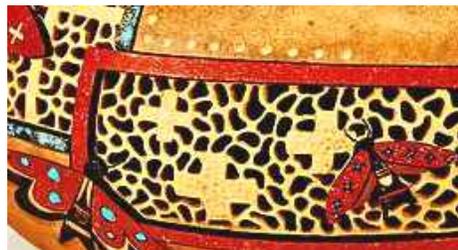
Tips for use: For best results, DO NOT put sharp bends in the flexshaft while you are carving. This will greatly reduce the life of the inner shaft. Also, occasionally remove the inner shaft and lubricate it with grease or vaseline.

New -an inexpensive carving bur set for the budget minded person who wants to give carving a try without investing a lot into tools. This [10piece bur set](#) is extremely affordable, and includes a free budget bur holder. This is available on the [Carving Burs](#) page. Supply is limited.



The long awaited FILIGREE Carving Tutorial is now available!

Because it is difficult for many people to attend my classes, I've finally produced a filigree project packet. Learn direct from the course originator who is an award-winning artist and an experienced instructor. While this tutorial will not replace the benefits of attending a regular class with hands-on instruction, it is the next best thing. If you have enjoyed my "Gourds" book or my other project packets, then you will appreciate the clearly written step-by-step instructions and well photographed examples. The tutorial includes information about designing, bur selection, hole shaping and much more. You can order the Filigree Carving instructions and appropriate burs on the [Project Packets page](#).



June Feature: An interview

I was recently contacted by Teri Henderson, a California gourd artist who was taking a class called the "Business of Art" at the Golden West Community College in Huntington Beach, CA. She was asked to pick an artist she admired and to interview them about their history and their art. I was very flattered that Teri contacted me and did her presentation on my work, including a slide show/laptop presentation on my website. She reported back that the other students were impressed and surprised by gourds as art. I thought the interview might be of interest to other gourd artists as well, the questions and my answers are below.

1) You're obviously a natural artist, what is your art background and what led you to discover gourds? When did you first start working on gourds?

I started working with gourds around 10 years ago. I stumbled on some painted gourds at an art show and the person making them had a few raw gourds she was willing to sell to me - I played with them and got excited about their possibilities very quickly. I'd tried so many different hobbies over the years that I already had a lot of tools on hand and it was easy to get started.

I took art all through jr. high and high school and actually planned on majoring in art in college. I took one drawing class in college and the teacher discouraged me so much with his negative attitude towards realism that I switched majors and graduated with an unrelated degree. (I was doing very realistic work at the time. He told me what I was doing wasn't art and if I wanted to do that sort of thing I should take photography instead!)

After retiring from a brief sports medicine career to raise my children, I started back into doing arts and crafts for fun. I also had a cottage industry for 20 years where I built dollhouse miniatures. I was getting burnt out and stopped doing miniatures when I got into gourds.

I usually teach myself basic techniques just by reading books, and over the years I have tried everything from stained glass to scrimshaw to wood carving to basketry, (and many other crafts!) and I also dabbled with more traditional art media such as watercolors. Fortunately, I'm good with my hands and much of it comes easy, but I am also a perfectionist and I do work hard at what I do.

2) You're designs and carving techniques are beautifully unique and I consider them trailblazing. What was your evolution to perfecting the intricate carving and cutting that you do now? Technique wise and tool wise.

I had done a lot of woodcarving for fun, I started that probably 25 years ago - so I already had a Foreman tool and a really nice Detail Master burner that I had been using for years. I carved duck decoys and small bird and animal sculptures out of wood, and all the skills I learned from that made the transition to gourd carving pretty easy. I also love Native American pottery, and the gourds were a perfect canvas for combining carving and Southwestern/Native designs. Over the years I've added a few tools such as an air carver and a few burs, but just experimenting with what I already had on hand was the most beneficial thing.

I always enjoy seeing what artists are doing with other types of media, so in addition to being influenced by Native potters I also get inspirations from ceramic artists, woodworkers and woodturners, leather workers, bead makers, etc. I developed some of my "signature" gourd carving techniques just from trying ideas that came from other types of art. These ideas were innovative as far as gourds are concerned, but lots of those techniques are used by artists in other media.

Like every other artist, I have to keep reinventing myself and adding new techniques and ideas to keep ahead of the people that copy your work. (You also have to do things more skillfully so your work looks more professional than the copyists' work.)

3) What is your favorite part of your gourd art, from start to finish? (As simple as this sounds, mine is when I'm done wood burning and can scrub the pencil lines off and see the beautiful gourd and outlines together for the first time.)

I enjoy carving a lot more than I enjoy painting, so most of my gourds are pretty heavy on the carving and lighter on the painting emphasis. :) For my really nice pieces, I spend almost as much time researching the subject and designing as I do on the actual carving. I want things to be as accurate as possible; for example if I'm carving a particular animal I want to portray it with the appropriate plants, trees, etc. surrounding it, and I want the subject to be anatomically correct. I do spend time so the painting looks really nice, but carving is still the most fun part of each project for me.

4) Who is, or are, your favorite artists in any medium?

I admire Les Namingha and Russell Sanchez (Native potters), Helen Hardin (Native painter) Robert Bateman and Carl Brender (wildlife artists) Bihn Pho (wood turner/carver) and Pat Godin (woodcarver) among many others.

5) Do you try to work on your gourd art every day? Or do you have days out of your busy week that you set aside to work on them?

Since I've started teaching a lot I've had less time for my own art. That is pretty frustrating because even when I do have time for my own work I don't feel as motivated to create. A heavy teaching schedule can make you a bit burned out. I'm going to try to back off on the teaching just a bit so I have more time to do my own gourds. (I do enjoy the teaching though, as it's very rewarding to get others excited about gourds and carving.)

I would go crazy though if I didn't have a creative outlet of some sort. Even when I'm taking a break from gourds I might be carving eggs, building something, or just gathering ideas for future projects. I get all itchy if I'm not doing something creative, it's a compulsion. When a full blown idea hits me I am like a fanatic and I'll work on it every waking moment until it is done. Fortunately my husband took over the cooking when he retired and he reminds me to quit now and then to eat dinner. ;)

6) I tend to only work on 1, maybe 2, pieces at a time, I've always been like that no matter what medium I'm working with. Do you finish one piece before starting another or do you switch from project to project?

I usually only work on one piece at a time - I want to see it finished! However, sometimes I'll have two projects going just because what I'm working on requires drying time or something - it's better to pick up something else during that time or else I would rush things that aren't really ready for the next step. (For example waiting for oil paint to dry or resins to cure.) I may get really into the second project and finish it before going back to the first one - it just depends on which one captures my interest the most at the time.

7) Do you take gourd classes yourself? What is something you want to learn to do - with gourds or not gourd related.

No, I've never taken a gourd class as many of the current classes are to teach projects instead of techniques. I'm interested in learning new skills, not how to copy a project someone else has designed. (In my classes, each person has the freedom to use their new skills to create a gourd that looks different from their neighbors!) I'd rather get a good book at the library and teach myself anyway. I do think it's flattering that many of the teachers out there in the gourd world are my former students!

I have taken a couple of classes on silversmithing and lost wax casting because I got to use their expensive equipment at the class. No sense buying all that stuff yourself until you find out if you like it. I also took one class on native pottery techniques, we went out to dig and process our own clay and I've never seen a book that taught those things. I've learned almost everything else on my own through books or just by talking to people about what they do.

If I were to take any classes in the future it would be to learn from someone working in a different media.

8) Do you have a special memory of a person or group who has purchased one of your pieces of art? Or an award you are particularly proud of?

Your first major sale is always very exciting, it makes you feel good to know someone actually likes what you've done well enough to pay you for it. However, the most exciting thing for me was just getting a gallery to accept my gourds in the first place - many galleries don't consider gourds as fine art.

I don't get too excited about awards, as they are so subjective. I know myself whether something I've done is good or not. I do enter things in competitions occasionally because people that buy my work like to have the ribbons with the piece; I don't keep the ribbons myself. Winning "stuff" is good though, I have won some monetary prizes and some tools and that was really great!

Featured Instructional Videos of the Month:

Click on the link above to visit SmartFlix.

Great for those who don't learn as well from books!



[Relief Carving In A Different Light](#)



[Show: Season 1](#)



[Counting Basket Weaving Series 200 - Part 1](#)



[So You Thought You Couldn't Draw](#)



[Creating a Faery Figure](#)

Reader's Mailbag



From Barbara Wellman of Colorado:

I just read your latest newsletter and enjoyed it immensely, as usual. Thanks for all of your good information. I still have many projects in your book to try and will never run out of ideas, I have done several gourds recently and am actually having a small show in June with a friend who is a potter and photographer.

I wanted to tell you that the small sanding belts you sell are perfect for cleaning the inside of the spirals on a cut gourd. They can be inserted (without the holder) between the spirals and all you need to do is pull them back and forth. I couldn't find anything else that worked as well.

My question to you is that it appears impossible to find zucca gourds this year. I made a carved kachina (on 2 sides) last year that sold and I'd like to do more. That gourd was 15" high and 5-6" in diameter just to give you an idea.

(If you know of a source for zuccas, please let me know and I will pass that information along to Barbara.)

Tip of the Month: What do you carry in your basic tool box?

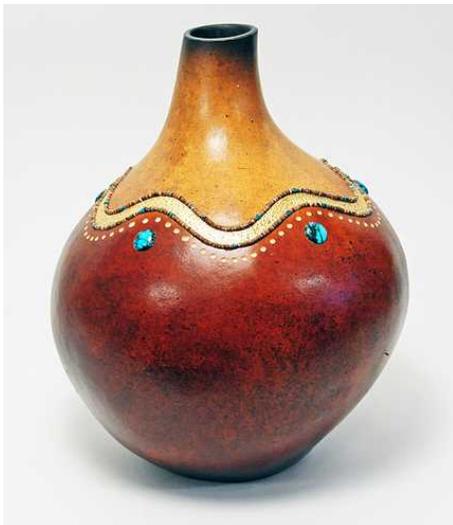
Here is a short listing of tools I pack in a toolbag for classes and traveling. Your list may vary, depending on the type of gourd work you do.

What items would you include that aren't on this list? *Send me a note and I'll post an updated list next month!*

- Dust mask, apron, eye protection - (in my case, reading glasses!)
 - Xacto knife and extra sharp new blades (protected in a travel toothbrush tube.)
 - Masking tape and/or duct tape
 - Pencil, Sharpie marker, and graphite paper for my students
 - Small hand tools: (pinvise, small drills, rifflers, etc.)
 - Sanding stick, emery board or sandpaper
 - Small screwdriver and pliers for repairs
 - Travel pack of baby wipes
 - Cleaning tools / scraper /copper scrub pad
 - Dremel or other rotary tool, bur box and burs
 - If needed, a cordless drill and accessories such as carbide cleaner and holesaws
- Do you have a tip or tutorial we can feature here? Please [contact me](#).*

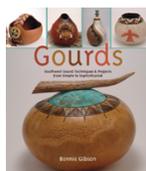
Featured Gourd of the Month: Southwest Contemporary

This gourd is fairly simple in its presentation, but it is elegant and shows off the natural beauty of the gourd at the same time. The gourd features inlaid voluta and turquoise heishi, inlaid turquoise cabochons and gold leafing.

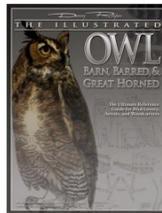


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Gourds Southwest Gourd Techniques & Projects from Simple to Sophisticated by Bonnie Gibson



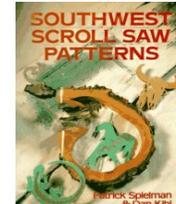
Featured Books of the Month:



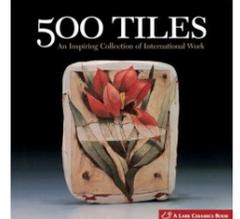
[The Illustrated Owl](#)



[Plants: 2,400 Copyright-Free Illustrations](#)



[Southwest Scroll Saw Patterns](#)



[500 Tiles](#)

The Illustrated Owl is a brand new release and the last in a series of fabulous raptor books. Plenty of reference material and art in this one.

Plants has lots of copyright free plant related drawings.

Southwest Scroll Saw Patterns - These patterns are drawn for scroll saw cutting, but should work very well on gourds also!

500 Tiles is another in the great "500" series from Lark Books. Every book in this series is loaded with beautiful full color photos and plenty of inspirations!

Gourds - General

Patterns and Designs

Gourds - Misc.

Musical Instruments

Pyrography Books

Carving Books

Weaving

Decorative Painting

**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.*

(Click on book cover for ordering information.)



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<http://www.arizonagourds.com/june08.html>

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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. (Currently, my emails to all COX.NET addresses are being blocked. You must physically add my address to you safe senders list or contact your service provider.)

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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