



WEST SUSSEX WOODTURNERS

LOCKDOWN 2020 NEWSLETTER

EDITION 2

An Associated Club of the AWGB

Welcome to the 2nd Edition of the amazing fake newsletter.

As I am not certain if there will be a June meeting either I have split the various articles I have received so I can produce another fake Newsletter if required.

I hope everyone is well and surviving the lockdown and getting some turning done. Some may remember that I put out a request from Malcolm Hunt for some assistance with drying wood. I would like to thank all those who offered advice and to Colin Willetts who wrote me an essay. I have included all these below other than those which made totally inappropriate comments. David Turgoose also sent me a link to various articles on wood seasoning but for some reason I could not copy them over.

Question: How do I season wood and stop it from splitting?

The short answer is you can't, at least not always; some wood will split whatever you do to it.

But there are some things you can do to help alleviate the problem.

First: with 'free' wood, i.e. garden pruning, gifts from friends and neighbours, expect a lot of wastage.

Second: unless you have commercial milling and drying facilities, do not bother trying to produce commercial style bowl blanks.

Splitting is caused by stresses in the wood as it loses moisture, first as sap and then in the structure of the cells. This can cause the wood to split if it is left to dry too quickly. Slowing down the moisture loss can give the wood a chance to settle naturally and it 'may' not split. Sealing the end grain helps, commercially this is usually hot wax but anything will do, old paint, PVA, even sanding sealer to slow down the loss. Keep it out of sun in a cool, dry, airy place to dry naturally. The rule of thumb says a year per 1" of thickness but this is arbitrary and depends on conditions and in any case anything over about 4" will probably never fully dry naturally.

With branch wood, i.e. up to about 4" in dia, leave the wood in as longer lengths as possible. Only cut it into shorter lengths when you are going to use it. Wood will often only split at the ends so if you start with 12" and lose 3-4" off each end there is not much left. If you lose the same off of a 4 foot length there is still plenty left.

Larger diameters will probably never dry full in the centre and unless you want the full diameter are best split through the centre into two half round sections, or planked if large enough and you have the facilities. That removes a lot of the stresses in the wood as it dries. You can then seal the end grain and leave to dry as per branch wood above.

Alternatively rough turn it into bowls straight away. This reduces the drying time. If you want more on this let me know but the idea is to make the bowl shape but with a thick wall to allow for shrinkage then leave it to dry and still have enough wood left to remount it and turn it to a finish at a later date. A wall thickness of about 10% of the overall diameter is about right.

It can also be turned into a bowl while still wet but in that case it needs to be turned very thin (<3mm) and allowed to warp as it dries. Take care as it will often be changing shape while you are still turning.

In both cases complete the turning, outside and inside, in one session, do not leave it and expect to come back to it later as it will have moved in the meantime. Sanding and finishing can be left for later but as it will probably not run true some more care will be required.

If the wood is very wet, beware, you, the lathe and the tools will also get wet. Some sap is corrosive so be prepared to clean and dry things after.

There is much more that can be said on seasoning wood but I hope this provides some help.

Colin Willetts

If you have use of a micro wave you can dry your turn piece , weigh your item and record the weight,, put it in the microwave turn on defrost and give it 5 minutes, weigh it again and let it stand for 20 minutes then keep doing this till the weigh stays the same ,or you turn your green wood to finish then keep aplying Danish oil the oil replaces the moisture

Alan Wesley

I have turned wet wood for 15 years now and lose approx 10% I find that if you have wood greater than 1-inch failure rate goes up rapidly. It is also important to have the rough turned bowl a constant thickness. I then place the bowl in a polythene carrier bag and twist the top and hang it in my workshop or garage. When the mood takes me I turn the bowl inside out and hang it up again. I repeat this until there is no moisture in the bag when I open it and then I hang it up with the top slightly open. I then weigh it and repeat weighing after 2 or 3 weeks until I get a constant weight.

I store them in the house and turn them when the mood takes me. Usually when it is a horrible wet day Some woods are more liable to split than others. Fruit woods are a challenge beech oak much easier. Spalted wood is the easiest for obvious reasons.

As a gimmick, I sometimes turn a bowl from freshly felled wood in one day by turning the bowl to less than 1/2 inch and microwave on high for 1 minute allow it to cool then another minute. When it feels dry, weigh it and repeat microwave in 1 minute sessions until constant weight is achieved.

Ted Hickford

After spending 20 odd years of trying to find an answer to Malcolm's question the only sure fire way is time. He could speed up the progress a little by microwave on low for 5 mins then pop it in the freezer for a couple of hours, do this for quite a few times, he will have to use a moisture metre or a set of scales, when the weight stays the same or the moisture metre stays the same it's done. it sometimes works but no guarantees. The other way is to part turn a bowl leaving an inch thick wall & store it somewhere warm & airy, still takes a few months, it will go out of true & may still split. Best to buy blanks or seasoned planks & cut your own

Jim Harris

As a new turner I have been trying to source newly cut wood and to season it by roughing out and storing it in a dry but unheated place. I have encountered the same problem as Malcolm especially with Apple which splits almost as you watch it. I have applied end grain sealer which didn't seem to work and I have now started placing the roughed out pieces in plastic bags to try and slow down the drying, which so far appears to be working, but am I only delaying the inevitable?

Doug Dabell

There is a video on you tube showing how to make a drying box. If you go to Google and enter: quick and cheap drying box for bowl blanks, you tube, it should come up.

Paul Tansley

I have just sealed a load of logs...

I heated a couple of kgs of candle wax beads on an old big saucepan..

Dunk each piece in about 2 cms and allow to cool off. Do the other end.

(Don't drop the log or the wax will splash up your arm..... serious ouch!!)

John De Little

I started turning about 10 years ago and have read numerous articles on this subject. Over that time I have been given many pieces of timber by friends and neighbours in the hope of drying it and using it .Sealed the ends-yes. Stacked in an area to keep out the rain and allow air circulation etc etc but to no avail. The rule of thumb an inch per year plus 1 year did not work for me.

What about a club outing to West at Selham for those interested enough to discuss this with people who obviously know what they are doing.

Bill Webb

Ball Turning Jig

Having seen Andy Coates demonstrating a ball turning jig, thought you might be interested in the jig that I made, when asked to make a number of balls for a coconut shy.

The example ball that I have now made is not quite spherical, the turning axis length is about 3mm. short of the diameter, but as Andy said, balls are not always needed to be true and dead straight running, especially if you are going to throw them at coconuts.

If you do make one of these jigs, make sure the vertical jig axis, is in line with the lathe turning axis. I found my lathe bed centre was 7mm. different the lathe turning axis and the first attempt was a doughnut shaped ball. Maybe the not quite spherical ball could be a result of a residual inaccuracy of the jig to turning axis relationship, as a 1.5mm inaccuracy would result in a 3mm difference between diameter and axis length.

The use of the jig is a little wasteful of wood, as each one needs a length about 1.5 x the diameter. Maybe re-shape the cutter pillar on the left side to reduce waste. The rotating top section of the jig has a number of holes drilled, to accommodate larger and smaller balls, the cutter is a length of 10 x 10mm. H S S , which I think I found on e-bay.

This item was initially prepared for the "show and tell" table, but we shall all have forgotten Andy Coates, by the time of the next gathering at Storrington!

David Turgoose



NEXT MONTH:

I have a couple of small items but if anyone wants to send me additional articles I will try to get them in as well.

MEMBERS SHOW AND TELL TABLE:

See the Club's website for examples of work done by club members.