

Wet & Dry Turning - Part II of IV

The Mad Woodturner

Last month I introduced "stabilizing" green wood turnings that you've only partially turned to completion and for whatever reason can't finish turn it for awhile. Now, I'll detail what I mean and how you might do it.

The basic principle is to protect that partially turned piece from drying out too quickly by keeping air movement and direct sunlight at bay. Even sitting for a couple of hours may cause some pieces to start cracking or warping. All that some pieces may need is just a covering by a cloth or a paper/plastic bag to protect them. A better alternative is to coat the piece in something like a wax. Personally, I use Johnson's Paste Wax (a floor wax WITHOUT silicone) for this purpose. You could also use a commercial wax emulsion product like Anchorseal. Any kind of waxy covering that completely seals the wood should work. These wax coatings will protect longer than a cloth or bag and cause less problems with mold/mildew buildup too. It won't prevent it but it's better. The problem with a wax temporary covering is that it can be a little messy to get off once you start re-turning. It's not too bad though.

Another way of doing this is to just simply dunk your partially turned piece into water. Yes, WATER. It seems so basic but it's really easy, cheap, and not very messy to dry it off a little before spinning it up. What you're doing is "Stabilizing" by providing the ingredient, water, that you want to keep in the wood before you're finished with it. Keep it completely submerged all the time and it'll last for weeks. Some people put a little dishWASHING (not dishwasher) soap in there too calling it LDD (for Liquid Dishwashing Detergent). I've not seen a difference in my stabilizing efforts when compared to just straight water, frankly. Please Note: use of LDD has nothing (NADA!) to do with drying wood.

Taming of the Skew

Deb Faulkenberry

Okay, I know, that sounds a little silly, but I recently watched a Shakespeare movie by a similar name and I thought that I'd like to write something about skews that would in no way reflect on the necessity of their use in the woodturning world, nor their popularity.

I have learned, after an initial period of disdain, to really like the skew. I have two that I use, a 1/4" and a 1/2" skew. One is a Grizzly cheapo and one is a Sorby. Before I really took to the skew I was a 1/4 gouge person. Then, as beads and coves became more important in my life, I discovered how versatile the skew was.

Our Illustrious Librarian, Andy, told me about a tape by a guy named Richard Raffin. Said that I should watch this guy as he did a spindle (spindles are my specialty.) So I did. And, what do you know, this guy was better than I am!! Okay, stop laughing, nearly everyone is better than I am. I am so new at it that I just haven't had time to develop my skills as only time will do. Anyway, I was pretty impressed with this Raffin guy. He takes his blocks from square to round with this skew of his. He has actual names for the different cuts he does, oh, and he just uses that grip of his to stabilize the pressure against the wood. Of course he is using a longer handled tool than I do that he actually tucks under his elbow when he cuts. What an education.

Peel cut, or peeling cut: well, I would describe that as a cut with the pointy end down, the bevel riding on the wood.

Scooping cuts or roughing cuts: are forceful and pushed from end to end with the tip down, roughing down a block to round, the tip leading the way.

Plaining cut: sheer cut with the point down and the thumb pushing the bevel against the wood, unless you're cutting beads, then the point follows the back end of the blade.

Refining cut: looks like a carefully controlled cut to smooth out torn grain to me.

Okay, these are all sounding the same to me. They all look pretty much the same, too. Point down, grip right on the metal just below the edge of the blade. Seems to me the biggest variations were when he changed from a 1" to a 1/2" blade, and when he used his left hand above, then below the tool rest. I admit, I'm no expert and it will be a long time before I could even be considered a Good woodturner. And, okay, Joe, I admit that cutting the wood makes it easier to finish, and faster, than scraping.

Having the tool pressure running parallel to the axis rather than toward the center is essential to cutting longer, thinner spindles. Raffin's video shows just what a master he is at this technique. And don't you just love it when he curls his fingers all the way around the spindle as it's turning? The part where he parts the long spindle off of the tail stock with the spindle still spinning while he's holding the tip end and trimming it off clean just sends chills down my back!!