

Free Online Project

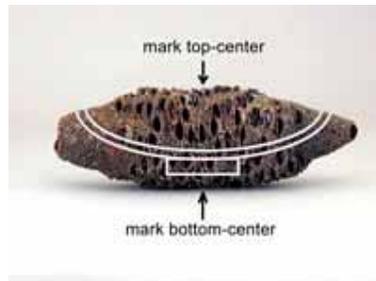
Banksia Pod Winged Bowl

by David Schweitzer with Stephen Hatcher



The humble banksia pod has been used for boxes, hummingbird feeders, and Christmas ornaments for years. This is a new approach—turning the banksia pod into a natural-edge winged bowl that is enjoyable for turners of all levels. This design draws the viewer in to look closely and handle the form. Full of intricate patterns and a furry moss-like cambium layer, this piece makes a nice addition to your collection or a simple gift that is sure to please. Banksia pods are very dry, so turning them is dusty. Therefore, if you have a good dust collector, use it while turning, otherwise wear a respirator. Every woodturning has the potential to disintegrate on the lathe, but the banksia pod poses a greater risk than many other materials. Wear a face shield while turning the form initially in case you inadvertently discover a weakness in the pod that's invisible while the piece is turning.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS



Step 1. Spend a few minutes determining how the banksia pod should best be positioned on the lathe. The outer tips should be solid (no seed holes). Mark the centerline for mounting.



Step 2. Place the pod between centers on the lathe with the bottom towards the tailstock. Dave does not use a cone-shaped live center in order to minimize damage to the pod's foot.



Step 3. Rough turn the bottom of the pod using a 1/2" bowl gouge. For a finishing cut, Dave prefers to use a pull-cut because he thinks that produces the cleanest cut. Do not use a scraper because it will tear the edges.



Step 4. Check that the tenon size will match your chuck. At this point, it may also be necessary to shift the live center placement to get a well-balanced foot on the pod. Note the gauge Dave uses to do this.



Step 7. After repositioning the work in his chuck, Dave checks that the "wings" on the pod are symmetrical by noting how far they extend along his tool rest.



Step 10. Dave has finished turning the top side with the live center removed. Again use a sheet of blackened cardboard to check the form profile.



Step 13. Once the pod has been sanded to 400 grit, apply diluted shellac as a sanding sealer. This finish leaves the furry inner layer of the pod still soft, an effect Dave prefers.

Step 5. A piece of cardboard that has been painted black will allow you to check the bottom side profile of your work while the piece is spinning on the lathe.



Step 8. Rough turn the top side of the pod, again using a 1/2" gouge. Stop frequently to check that the pod material does not have any flaws that will cause it to break on the lathe.



Step 11. A close-up look at the pod top side reveals few tool marks, and this is typical of Dave's mastery. His use of very sharp tools has left almost no edge fraying.



Step 14. Prepare to finish the foot by reversing the pod on the lathe. Dave uses a homemade support padded with leather to hold the work against the tailstock.

Step 6. Always hand rotate the work when repositioning the tool rest to be sure the tool rest will clear the piece. Make very fine cuts to prevent damage at the pod tips.



Step 9. The pod with the top rough turned about 1/4" thick. Keep the live center in place during all the roughing for better stability and safety.



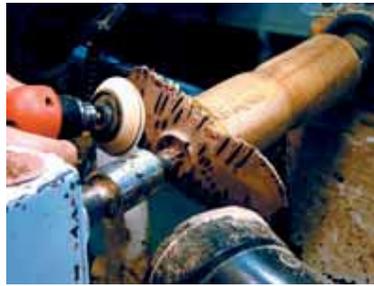
Step 12. Most mortals will need to start with a coarser grit, but Dave starts with 240. The lathe is off, and the sanding pad is positioned so its edge moves away from the pod.



Step 15. This photo was taken using a flash while the work was turning. It shows Dave's well-controlled gouge making fine finishing cuts on the pod bottom side. Due to close quarters, Dave uses a 3/8" bowl gouge for these cuts.



Step 16. Turn a recessed area in the foot. Take great care to avoid any contact between fingers and the rough-edged rapidly spinning pod.



Step 17. Power sand the bottom side of the pod with the lathe off. Again, to prevent a sander catch, the sanding pad is positioned so its edge moves away from the pod during the process.



Step 18. A small sander with 80-grit abrasive is used to remove the nub left on the foot. Finer grits are then used to finish the foot area, and diluted shellac is again used as a sealer.

SUPPLIES

Large banksia pod (at least 8" long will work best)

Tools:

Lathe

1/2" and 3/8" bowl gouge

Handheld electric drill with sanding pad

Assorted grits of abrasive paper

Diluted shellac

Face shield and respirator

Dust collector

Sheet of blackened cardboard

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