

## *Woodturning Tips and Advice*

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- **Spray Bottles** I keep three spray bottles at hand in the shop with these contents: dilute shellac, dilute dishwashing soap, and denatured alcohol. Get the industrial solvent spray bottles from [USPlastic.com](http://USPlastic.com) - they'll last forever and cost about \$1.75. Uses are noted below. For dilute shellac use only super blond (dewaxed) shellac and dilute it to the color of tea with denatured alcohol. For soapy water add 4-6 drops of dishwashing liquid to a spray bottle of water.
- **Drying Wet Wood** I use bigleaf maple for 99% of my work and even if it's flinging water when I rough it, it will dry to <8% moisture in a dry kiln in 2-3 days at 120F without checking (usually). My 'kiln' is a big cabinet with a tiny space heater plus fan (with shutoff if tipped or overheated). It heats up to ambient plus 50 degrees and costs almost nothing. It works great for curing lacquer finishes too, cutting curing from 10 days to 2 days.
- **Stabilizing Punky Wood** I mix West Systems Epoxy (105/205) with acetone in a 1:1 ratio then slather onto the wood. It soaks it up and makes the wood wonderful to turn. I've only done this with spalted maple. I like this over Pentacryl or MinWax Wood Hardener.
- **Filling Small Voids** To fill small pits and voids I use West System Epoxy (105/205) with Filler 405. Mix 405 into epoxy to make a very thick paste and add a few drops of acrylic paint to color as needed then smear over surface. Cure 12 hours and it'll sand off easily leaving a surface smooth. This is easily found online or at marine supply stores.
- **Final Cuts in a Dry Vessel** To get less tear-out in a dry vessel, stuff it with wood chips and soak with soapy water using the spray bottle (see spray bottles) then leave tuning slowly for 15 minutes. Blow out the chips and make light cuts with a sharp burr. It's like turning wet wood but only for a pass or two. Then the vessel dries quickly and finishes without any problems.
- **Getting a Flat Platter Surface** Sand with a 5" hard sanding pad using a very light touch. I like angle grinder pads with a drill adapter from [VincesWoodNWonders.com](http://VincesWoodNWonders.com).
- **Avoiding CA Glue Stains** Spray a small crack with dilute shellac (see spray bottles) to seal the wood, let dry, then apply CA glue. The CA glue stops the crack and the shellac prevents a stain. The CA will stick to shellac like it was dry wood. Shellac is handy to seal wood too.
- **Sand Paper** The new ceramic sanding pads are excellent, outlasting others several times over. There are many sources but I like [TheSandingGlove.com](http://TheSandingGlove.com) and [VincesWoodNWonders.com](http://VincesWoodNWonders.com).
- **Sanding Pads** Protect your velcro sanding pads by making buffer pads from hook and loop velcro sheets. Take adhesive conversion velcro, sheets or hook and loop, and stick the gooey sides together. Then cut out discs to fit your pads. These will cost about a dime to make compared to those pre-fab ones that cost several dollars. I buy 4" wide conversion velcro from [OnLineIndustrialSupply.com](http://OnLineIndustrialSupply.com). Fabric stores and hardware stores have smaller sizes.
- **Adhesives Survey** CA glue is a terrible long-term adhesive, don't use it for gluing your work together - use epoxy or wood glue. I like West System 105/205 for general use and West System G/Flex for waxy woods. These are easily found online or at marine supply stores. However don't use epoxy to join two pieces of the same wood if light colored (like maple) because it'll leave a visible joint. White wood glue works better. I like Titebond I but avoid any glue intended for exterior use as it tends to swell out of joints as the temperature changes.

## *Woodturning Tips and Advice (continued)*

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- **Your Artistic Voice (or Lack Of)**

**Finding It** There is tremendous beauty and satisfaction in making purely woodturned forms, both functional and non-functional. But to exhibit and sell woodturnings as high-end artworks you need to be unique. The one universal trait among artistic woodturners are they are tinkerers and problem solvers. Many are able to draw as well and this is an important skill to learn, in my opinion. I think you need to pursue several artistic areas as hobbies in addition to woodturning. This leads to a cross-fertilization of techniques and leads to new ideas. But as I said, woodturning in it's purest form is a love we all share.

**Statement** If you are going the artsy route you'll need to create an artist statement. This can be hard work but it needs to reflect on your inspiration and interests. Writing it can clarify who you are as an artist. It's not easy to do. Keep it short, say 1/3 a page or less.

- **Galleries**

**Finding Good Galleries** Good galleries and famous galleries are not necessarily one in the same. Beware of status galleries, they can disappoint the best of us. I like to research the Niche Magazine Survey that ranks galleries by customer and artist satisfaction. The top ranked galleries in this survey will learn about you, promote customer relationships that sell your work, and pay promptly. Word of mouth and referrals are worth a lot too.

**Approaching a Gallery** Good galleries often post instructions and due dates for artists to submit portfolios for consideration. Submit a resume, artist statement, and bio that is typed and free of any spelling or grammatical errors on good quality paper. Submit everything on-time. Photographs need to be pro-quality. Include a brief cover letter about why you are interested in their gallery. Have a sample of your best work ready to send if requested.

**Supporting** Galleries need your help to sell your work. Make a cheat sheet for sales people that's brief and easy to remember. Make a brief set of points on how you make your pieces, what's unique, what is your inspiration, and any awards you won or books you're in or whatever you can brag about. If you are in a book or magazine send the gallery a copy.

- **Photography** With digital cameras, inexpensive setups, and PhotoShop Elements you can make your own near professional quality photos. I spent \$600 total and get no complaints. I use a 10 MegPixel Canon set for highest resolution and lowest compression. A CubeLite box with three lights and a gray-to-black graduated backdrop are setup permanently in a storage room but it's easily taken down or moved. I use PhotoShop Elements 8.0 to edit the photos. This is a lecture topic unto itself but it really isn't difficult to learn this program. The help files will walk you through a full edit session in an hour or two and you'll see which editing tools you need and those you don't. I use only six or eight tools out of many.

- **Etiquette** Woodturners are nice people but good etiquette is not always obvious. If you write an article or give a demo using techniques you learned from others, give them credit. Copying the work of masters is an excellent learning tool but don't put this work in shows or sell it. It will be noticed and word will spread via email to many that you are a plagiarist.