WESTERN CAPE WOODTURNERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER : November 2025

The Western Cape Woodturners Association is a group of folk with a common interest in woodturning and wood.

We aim to promote the art of turning wood and to create awareness of this craft in the community and encourage young members to join the fellowship.

Members meet every Wednesday at 6.30pm to do " hands-on " turning and get instruction and help.

The venue is the Pinelands Hobbies Club, Nursery Way, Pinelands, Cape Town.

The Formal Meeting is on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7pm.

Visitors are welcome .

November 2025:

The general meeting on 19th November will be handing out awards and the display of the submitted work for the showcase.

TAKE NOTE : The November showcase is around the corner -
Hand-in of work is on Wednesday 12th November at 6.15pm, for the pieces to be judged.
We encourage beginners and all the club members to submit work for the showcase.

AWSA 2025 guest demonstrator, Helen Bailey keeps the audience enthralled with one of her demonstrations.

Western Cape Woodturners Association Committee :

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AWSA 2025 Judges - from from right to left :
John Wessels, Hennie Meyer and Andrew Stevens, giving their critique of Andy Sutton's beautiful bowl.

First Place : Acacia bowl with carved rim
by Andrew Bourke.

Second Place : Paperbark Acacia bowl
by Andy Sutton.

Third Place : Masur Birch closed form
by Peter Nicolle

Contents :

EDITOR'S NOTE :

October saw the AWSA symposium , where we were entertained and educated by Helen Bailey, as well as many of our experienced and competent turners from around the country. Many friendships were renewed and new acquaintances made.
The trade and tool merchants were very busy, and as the saying goes " The new tool that is most needed by a turner is the tool he hasn't got".
Our sincere thanks must go to Gert Ferreira, Jan Richter, and the committee as well as the friends and family who helped with reception, transport, audio-visual and also magically producing lunch for all. The planning and organization needed many hours and anxious moments, but it came together superbly, and was enjoyed immensely by all.

I have put together some articles on box making and we must thank the American Association of Woodturners, the American Woodturner magazine, and Joshua Friend, Walt Wager, Alan Falk and Bob Rosand for their permission to let us reprint their articles.

Helen Bailey making shavings and the audience giving all their attention.

BIRTHDAYS IN NOVEMBER:

Apologies to the six members who had birthdays in October, and whose names were omitted in error.

Best wishes to all the members celebrating their birthdays in November:
Thomas Foos, James Florence, Nighat Johnson, David Hunter, Chana Opert, Robby Robertson, Marie Torrance, and Marius van Vuuren.

Joshua Friend, untitled, 2011, Sipo mahogany, figured maple, 4" × 8" (10 cm × 20 cm)

Crossgrain Jewelry Boxes

Joshua Friend

I like it when a customer challenges me to expand my turning repertoire. Recently, a woman asked if I would make her a jewelry box. I had turned plenty of endgrain boxes, but never one large enough to be regarded as a proper jewelry box, with dividers and a soft, welcoming interior. I began to consider how those standards could be applied to a turned jewelry box. Ultimately, the inquiry led me to explore turning lidded crossgrain boxes (also called lidded bowls).

Benefits and considerations

Unlike traditional endgrain boxes where the grain runs parallel to the ways of the lathe, crossgrain boxes are turned in a perpendicular, or faceplate-grain, orientation. This orientation allows for larger diameter boxes—expanses across the width of boards are usually larger than expanses across endgrain where the pith may be unavoidable. Wider diameters afford excellent opportunities to use the lid to showcase grain patterns, feature unusual figure, or add embellishments, such as chip carving. Also, the lid and body of the box can be made from different pieces of wood, which opens up possibilities for using contrasting species, like maple and walnut.

For endgrain boxes, the lid and body are usually made from the same piece of wood, with the grain continuing from the body to the lid. This means that when the wood expands and contracts with changes in moisture content, the body and lid are likely to move proportionately with one another and the original good fit is maintained. The lid and body of a crossgrain box, however, may behave differently with seasonal movement, especially if varying species are used together. For this reason, I do not try to achieve a tight or suction fit of the lid, which would be more likely to fail over time. Instead, I employ a tight fit only during the turning process and then intentionally loosen it for the final fit. Lifting a lid off a jewelry box should not require two hands.

1

Several crossgrain box lids are rough turned for drying.

Another consideration is the dryness of the wood. With most lidded boxes, endgrain or crossgrain, it is wise to start with wood that is thoroughly dried to minimize the effects of wood movement as a result of changes in moisture content. This especially holds true for crossgrain boxes. Professional turner Mike Mahoney noted about his crossgrain cookie jar, pictured on page 52, "I carefully dried the pieces: I brought the rough-turned pieces into the house for a few months to give them a natural environment." *Photo 1* shows several lids for jewelry boxes, which I rough turned both inside and out. The general shape is defined, and I left the lids slightly thick. Rough turning allows the wood to do most (and hopefully all) of its moving prior to final turning.

Noted demonstrator and teacher Richard Raffan said, "The lidded bowl is still my favored project ▸


2
Turn a shallow tenon on the top of the lid.


3
Establish the lip of the lid.


4
Shape the outside edge of the lid.


5
Hollow the inside of the lid.


6
Leave extra thickness in the middle to accommodate the knob.

through which students may practice facework techniques, and they are excellent design projects too." So, with these considerations in mind, let's make a lidded crossgrain jewelry box.

Start with the inside of the lid

It is advantageous to begin with the lid since the lip of the body will be formed according to the lid's established dimensions. Use material that is at least 1" (25 mm) thick (not 4/4 dimensional lumber, which is only ¾" [19 mm] thick). Mount the lid onto the lathe using a faceplate, but be aware of the length of the screws you choose and how deep they will go into the lid. Later, you will hollow out the inside of the lid enough to turn away the screw holes. I find that ¾" screws are long enough for a secure hold but not so long that the result is a too-thin lid after the holes are turned away. Turn a shallow tenon, about 3/16" (5 mm), and begin to rough shape the outside of the lid (*Photo 2*).

Remove the faceplate and remount the lid into a four-jaw chuck using the tenon. In this orientation, you can work on the inside of the lid using light cuts with sharp tools—remember that the lid is mounted with only a shallow tenon. After truing up the face with a gouge, cut straight in with a parting tool about ⅛" (3 mm) deep to establish the lip of the lid (*Photo 3*), which later will mate with the lip of the body.

Shape the outside edge where the lid will sit on the body (*Photo 4*). Unlike a typical endgrain box, where the outside profiles of the lid and body are shaped together, I shape the two components of crossgrain boxes separately. In this orientation, however, there is a likelihood of the wood chipping out as the tool exits the lid material, so I typically employ a design that does not require a flush cut from lid to body.

Next, use a bowl gouge to hollow the inside of the lid (*Photo 5*). Undercut the inside enough to remove the screw holes. I like to leave extra thickness of wood at the center to provide a decorative element and to accommodate the knob, which later will be glued into a recess on top of the lid (*Photo 6*).

Remove the lid from the chuck and set it aside. The top of the lid, including the knob, will be turned with the lid jam fitted onto the body after the body has been hollowed.

Turn the body and top of the lid

Mount the body material onto the lathe, using a screw chuck or faceplate. Since this box will be used to store jewelry, presumably with items stored in a single layer, the finished depth need only be about 2½" (65 mm). A taller box is not necessary.

True up the outside and bottom face and form a tenon (*Photo 7*). Then bring up the tailstock and advance the live center's point into the tenon to make a reference mark, which will be used later when jam chucking the body. (It will help you mount the body so that it will run true.)

Remove the body material from the lathe and remount it by holding the tenon in a chuck. Measure the diameter of the lip inside the lid (*Photo 8*) and transfer that measurement onto the body with a pencil. Use a parting tool to cut straight into the wood,

Joshua Friend, untitled, 2012, Walnut, figured maple, 4" × 8" (10 cm × 20 cm)

just a bit outside of this line to form a lip that the lid will later be jam fitted onto (*Photo 9*). It is important at this point to leave this lip oversized so that the lid does not yet fit onto it. There is a good chance that when the body is hollowed, the release of tension in the wood will cause the perimeter (lip) to change shape. If the wood is sufficiently dry, the hollowing will not cause much movement, but possibly enough to compromise a good jam fit of the lid, which is why I make the final jam fit of the lid *after* the body is hollowed.

Shape and sand the outside (*Photo 10*) and then hollow and sand the inside of the body (*Photos 11, 12*). It is not necessary for the inside profile to match the outside, as is usually the case with a bowl form. In addition, leave the wall thickness somewhat thicker than for a bowl to provide enough wood on the lip to ensure that it will not break off.

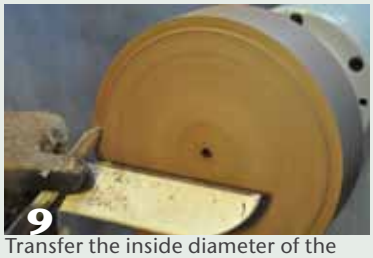
Next, make adjustments to the lip to ensure a jam fit of the lid (*Photo 13*). This can be done gently with a sharp parting tool or gouge. The goal is to achieve a fit that is tight enough to be able to final turn the lid (and knob) while it is jam fitted onto the body (*Photo 14*). Take small cuts, turning off the lathe frequently to test the fit. If too much material is removed, either moisten the wood fibers with water or apply masking tape around the perimeter of the lip to create a tight enough fit of the lid.

With the lid jam fit onto the body, it is time to add the knob material. A knob serves an important function, which is to allow the lid to be lifted with one hand. Knobs also provide interesting design opportunities.

Remove the body and lid from the chuck, but first make reference marks on the body and one of the chuck jaws to remount the tenon back into the chuck. This ensures that the body will run true when remounted. ▸

Turn a tenon on the body material.

Measure the diameter of the lip inside the lid.



Transfer the inside diameter of the lid's lip to the body and turn a lip.

Shape the outside of the body and sand.

Hollow out and shape the inside of the body.

Sand the inside of the body.

Make an adjustment to the lip to ensure a jam fit of the lid.

The inside of the lid fits over the lip of the body and for the next step, a jam fit is required.

Turn a cylinder for the knob.

With the lid jam fitted onto the body, cut a recess into the center of the lid to receive the tenon on the knob cylinder.

Test fit the knob.

Glue the knob into the recess and use the tailstock as a clamp.

Shape and then sand the outside of the lid.

Shape the knob using either a round-nose scraper (*l*) or a small bowl gouge (*r*).

Mount the material that you will use for the knob into the chuck. Either crossgrain (faceplate) or long grain works fine—it is a matter of preference. True up the end of this material, making it as flat across as possible. Then shape a tenon onto the end, about ⅛" (3 mm) deep and slightly smaller in diameter than the wood. Part off the material (*Photo 15*). Set the knob material aside and remount the body and lid into the chuck, aligning the reference marks. (The cylinder for the knob could be turned ahead of time, but for best results, shape the knob after it is glued onto the lid.)

Ensure that the lid is still jam fitted securely onto the body. Cut a recess into the center of the lid to receive the knob's tenon (*Photo 16*). I like to use a parting tool because it makes it simple to achieve a flat bottom and perpendicular sides in the recess, which are important to achieving a good glue joint. Take small cuts, turning off the lathe to test the fit (*Photo 17*). When you have the right fit, glue in the knob material, using the tailstock to apply pressure. I use a two-part epoxy for its gap-filling quality (*Photo 18*).

When the epoxy has cured sufficiently (usually overnight), proceed with shaping the lid and knob. Regardless of how good a jam fit you may have achieved of the lid to the body, leave the tailstock in place for extra support. Take light cuts with sharp tools. A gentle shear scraping can achieve a tear-free surface on the lid, even with figured wood (*Photos 19, 20*), so that I can begin sanding at 220 grit.

Shaping the knob can be a bit tricky, since you are trying to create a tight cove with limited access. I have had good results cutting downhill with a round-nose scraper. It is also possible to use a bowl gouge with the flute facing up and cutting with the wing, as long as the side bevel of the tool is rubbing and you are taking very light passes. Either way, cutting downhill with the grain is essential (*Photos 21, 22*).

Once you have the cove of the knob shaped, finish the top of the knob, taking light cuts. Remove the tailstock for the final passes (*Photos 23, 24*). If the jam fit of the lid is not tight enough, however, leave the tailstock in place, cut as far as you can, and finish the knob by carving and sanding with the lathe off.

With the lid shaped and sanded, remove it from the box. Now it is time to adjust the lip to achieve a loose fit of the lid. Do this by reducing the diameter of the lip on the body (*Photo 25*). Remove only a small amount of material and test fit the lid.

Finish the bottom

To remove the tenon from the bottom of the box and create a foot, I jam fit the body over a scrap block, cut to accommodate the inside. I use small-bubble bubble wrap to protect

Final shape the top of the knob using the tailstock for support until the final cuts.

Adjust the lip of the body to achieve the final loose fit of the lid.

Jam fit the body over a scrap block and use small-bubble bubble wrap to protect the box's interior.

Turn away the tenon and add detail to the bottom. Remove the remaining wood using a carving tool. Sand.

the box's interior surface and bring up the tailstock to hold the body in place (*Photos 26, 27*). Position the live center of the tailstock into the reference mark in the tenon that you made earlier.

Shape the bottom, undercutting it slightly, which will ensure that the box sits flat. I use a small bowl gouge, and when I get close to the live center, I switch to a shallow gouge. Leave a small nub, and remove it later with a carving chisel and abrasive. Add detail lines for visual interest or as reference lines for adding a personal inscription (*Photos 28, 29*).

Dividers, finish, and flocking

For the dividers inside the jewelry box, I use medium density fiberboard (MDF). The thinnest I have found is ¼" (6 mm) thick, which feels a bit too thick for the size of my jewelry boxes, so I reduce its thickness to 5/32" (4 mm) using a wide drum sander. Cut two pieces that will interlock and fit the profile inside the body. I use a profile gauge to transfer the inside profile of the body to the MDF and use a bandsaw and belt sander to cut and fine-tune the pieces before gluing them in place (*Photos 30, 31, 32*).

Apply finish to the body and lid. I spray them with several coats of gloss lacquer, but use whatever finish you prefer.

To add a soft lining inside the box, I spray in flocking fibers, which come in several colors. The process is easy—simply follow the manufacturer's instructions. First, thoroughly seal the area to be flocked using lacquer, shellac, or varnish. Note, however, that if the surface is not sufficiently sealed, you may only get a thin application of flocking because the flocking adhesive will have soaked into the wood too much. Apply the adhesive (colored to match the flocking fibers). Then quickly apply onto that the tiny flocking fibers. The result is a soft, felt-like surface (*Photos 33, 34*).

Flocking materials, including special applicators, can be purchased from DonJer Products (donjer.com).

The jewelry box is now ready to receive its crowning glory: jewels from its new owner. ■

Joshua Friend, a woodturner and writer, is a member of the Nutmeg Woodturners League, an AAW chapter that meets in Brookfield, CT. See jfriendwoodworks.com for examples of his work and contact information.

Joshua Friend,
untitled, 2012, Poplar, mineral-streaked maple, 4" × 8" (10 cm × 20 cm)

Create dividers by using a profile gauge to match the curve of the interior.

Apply adhesive and flocking fibers for a soft, feltlike lining on the interior. Have your box placed inside a clean tub or plastic-lined box so you can collect and reuse excess fibers.

Mike Mahoney, *Cookie Jar,* 2010, Ash, African blackwood, 9" × 14" (23 cm × 36 cm)

Bonnie Klein, untitled, 2011, Basswood, 2" × 3½" (5 cm × 9 cm)

Cindy Drozda, *Fire Star,* 2008, Amboyna burl, African blackwood, Mexican fire opal in 14K gold, 6" × 7" (15 cm × 18 cm)

Bill Clark, *Running in Circles,* 2009, Bigleaf maple, bloodwood, 2½" × 5" (6 cm × 13 cm)

Keith Gotschall, *Tortilla Holder,* 2012, Maple, 3¼" × 11½" (8 cm × 29 cm)

Richard Raffan, untitled, 1970, Walnut, 4" × 8" (10 cm × 20 cm)

TURN A PURSE BOX

Walt Wager (purse box) with Cynthia Gibson (pyrography)
Photo: Michael Gibson

Walt Wager

I first saw a picture of this kind of box on a friend's desk, but after searching the web and not finding anything like it, I set out to construct one from the photo. If you have a couple of Forstner bits and a small scroll chuck, it is a pretty simple and fun project. I call this a purse box because it seems a likely place to safely store a set of earrings or necklace, but it could be used to hold anything that will fit. The box comprises two tubes—one that slides into the other—and the parts are held closed by friction or magnets.

Turn the inner tube

Start with a 2" (5cm) square blank 7" (18cm) long. Rough-turn the blank to round and make a tenon so you can hold the workpiece securely in a four-jaw chuck. It is important that the blank run true, so once it is chucked you may need to true it up.

With a 1 1/16" (27mm) Forstner bit held in a Jacob's chuck mounted in your lathe's tailstock, drill a hole in the end of the blank 2"–2¼" (5cm–6cm) deep. This hole establishes the inside of the inner tube. The next step is to turn the outside of the inner tube

1 Drill into the purse box blank to form the inside walls of the inner tube.

2 Use a 1 3/16" Forstner bit to create a visual reference for the wall thickness of the tube.

3 Carefully reduce the diameter of the inner tube.

4 A simple gauge made by drilling the appropriate sized hole in scrap wood works well for checking your progress. Just slide the gauge over your workpiece (with the lathe off).

A safe way to sand inside a tube is to use a dowel to hold the abrasive.

Indicate a section that will become the top of the inner tube. This is a good place for design elements such as beads, coves, or burn lines.

straight and parallel to the inside (*Photo 1*). This inside tube will later slide into a 1 3/16" (30mm) hole in the outer tube, so the wall thickness of the inner tube should be turned slightly thinner than 1/16" (2mm).

Using a 1 3/16" Forstner bit, drill a shallow hole (just deep enough so you can see the edge) in the end of the blank. This mark will act as a visual gauge for turning the outside of the inner tube (*Photo 2*). Bring up the tailstock live center to steady the tube and turn the diameter down to the 1 3/16" mark left by the Forstner bit. Turn the outside to the length of the hole you drilled (*Photo 3*).

A handy way to determine when you have reached the outside diameter of the inner tube is to make a ring gauge by drilling a 1 3/16" hole in a piece of scrap wood. Stop the lathe frequently to check the diameter of the inner tube using your gauge or calipers. The gauge should slide smoothly over the tube without being too loose (*Photo 4*).

This is a good time to sand the inside and outside of the inner tube. To sand the inside, make a sanding mandrel by cutting a slot in the end of a dowel to hold the abrasive (*Photos 5, 6*). Do not put your finger and sandpaper into the spinning tube, as this is a dangerous practice.

Mark off about 3/4" (19mm) for what will be the top end of the tube (*Photo 7*). A spindle gouge works well for shaping this top section before parting off the inner tube. *Photo 8* shows a small bevel, to a cove, to a bevel, and a slightly domed or rounded end, but you can use any design you like here.

Turn the outer tube

To form the outer tube, drill a 1 3/16" hole in the remaining blank to a depth of at least 2 1/4". The inner tube should fit smoothly into this hole and go all the way into the hole up to the edge of the top. If the inner tube does not slide in far enough, drill the hole in the outer tube a bit deeper.

You can finish-turn the top of the inside tube using the outside tube as a jam chuck. If the fit is too loose, wedge it in with a piece of paper towel or wax paper (*Photo 9*). I used a spiral tool to decorate the top and filled in the lines with gilt cream.

You are now ready to turn the outside of the outer tube to your desired shape and diameter. I put the inner tube back inside the box so I can turn the bottom to be symmetrical with the top (*Photo 10*). Part off the outside tube.

Other steps

Now make a 3/16"- (5mm-) long tenon on what is left of the blank still in the chuck. This tenon will become the ▸

Use a hole drilled into the outer tube as a jam chuck to hold the inner tube for finish-turning its top. If the fit is too loose, add a layer of paper towel to take up the extra space.

Turning the outer tube with the inner tube inserted provides a visual comparison of decorative elements.

Form a bottom for the inner tube by creating a short tenon on the waste material, gluing the tube onto the tenon, and then parting the tube off. This creates a closed inner tube.

Carefully apply the inner tube to a drum sander to create the box's opening.

Jam chuck the outer box onto a waste block tenon to finish-turn the bottom.

Drill holes near the edge of both tubes to accept recessed magnets, which provide a hidden method of holding the box closed.

A small crystal recessed into the top and aligned with the box's opening serves as a decorative reminder of the tube's orientation.

bottom of the inner tube. Glue the tube onto the tenon. When the glue has cured, part the tube from the waste in the chuck and you have a closed tube (*Photos 11–13*).

To make the inside tube a box, form an opening by holding it against a sanding drum. Extend the opening to about halfway through the tube (*Photo 14*).

Make a jam chuck to finish-turn the bottom of the outer tube. I finished this part the same as I did the top of the inner tube—by decorating it with a spiral tool (*Photo 15*).

Add magnets

I use two small rare earth magnets to hold the box closed. The magnets I use are 5/16" (8mm) diameter and about 1/16" (2mm) thick, so I drill 5/16" holes slightly deeper than 1/16" to recess the magnets in the tubes (*Photo 16*). I intentionally position the magnets at the edge of the inner and outer tubes because when you twist the box slightly, the two magnets will repel and push the box open. After determining the orientation of the inner and outer tubes, I use a piece of blue tape to mark the edge on the outer tube where I need to drill the hole for the inside magnet (*Photo 17*).

If the fit is smooth and snug, you may not need magnets to keep it closed, but you don't want it so tight that you have to struggle to open it.

Indicate the opening

I like to put a small jewel in the top of the inner tube so the purse box owner can quickly identify the orientation of the box opening. This prevents someone from spilling the contents when sliding the box open. I used a 7/32" (6mm) drill bit to slightly recess a decorative crystal (*Photo 18*).

The only thing left is to finish your box. For this purse box, I used a buffed wax finish. If you made a friction-fit box, be careful when finishing. A couple of layers of lacquer might make the box too tight.

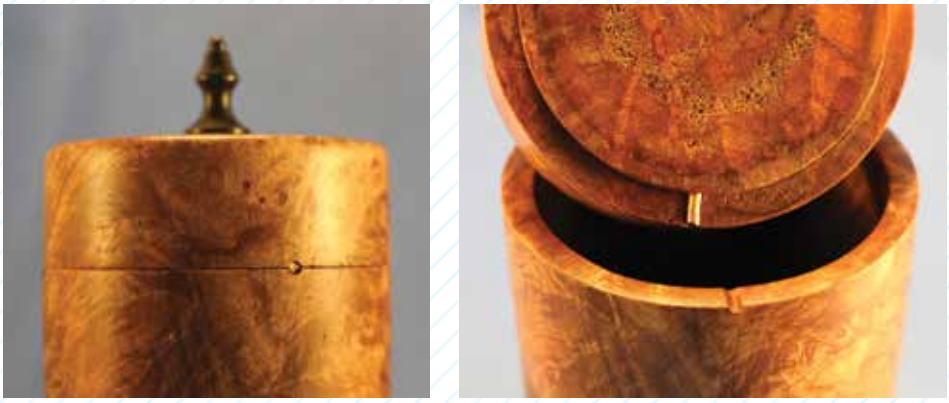
Voilà—a finished product. Although there are a number of steps, this project can be made relatively quickly, and the variations on design and finish make each box unique. ■

Walt Wager, a former university professor and industrial arts teacher, joined North Florida Woodturners and the AAW in 2002. He lives in Monticello, Florida, and is the Studio Coordinator and resident instructor at Camelot's Woodworking Studio at King Arthur's Tools in Tallahassee. Walt's work can be viewed at waltwager.com.

BOX LID ALIGNMENT PIN

Alan Falk

I like making lidded boxes from a single piece of wood with interesting grain or figure. Making the lid and box from the same piece of wood allows for the grain to flow continuously from box to lid, but it bothers me when the lid is rotated and the grain becomes misaligned. One simple, unobtrusive way to keep the lid aligned properly is to install a very small alignment pin where the lid meets the box. The pin is glued into a hole in either the lid or the box, depending on your lid design. When the lid is rotated, it "clicks" into place in exactly the right position.



An unobtrusive pin affixed at the box/lid juncture registers the lid at the correct grain orientation.

The idea is to align the grain as you like, drill a hole centered on the joint line between the lid and base, and glue in a pin. A short length of 14/2-gauge copper wire (*Photo 1*), stripped of its sheathing, works well for the pin, though you could use skewer sticks or another type of thin cylindrical material. My copper wire measured about .080" on the digital calipers, so I drilled a 3/32" (2.4mm) hole to accept it. You'll have to size your hole according to the pin material you choose.

Drill pinhole

After you've turned your box, firmly tape the lid to the base with the grain aligned to your satisfaction. The tape keeps the grain in proper alignment and holds the lid tight against the box. The hole should be drilled straight into the box, not at an angle, so I use a V-block type jig to hold the box securely in place on the drill press table (*Photo 2*).

Align your drill bit *exactly* where the lid and box meet (*Photo 3*), so half the hole will be in the lid and half will be in the top edge of the box. Drill to a depth appropriate for your box lid design; my lid design allows me to drill about 3/4" (19mm) deep.

Affix the pin

Cut a piece of stripped wire about 1" (25mm) long. Smooth one end with abrasives to remove any sharp corners. Separate the lid from the box. Apply a bit of epoxy or cyanoacrylate (CA) glue to the hole in the lid (or box, depending on your design) and push the pin material into the hole. Allow the adhesive to cure, then trim the short length sticking out so it doesn't extend beyond the circumference of the lid, as shown in the *opening image*.

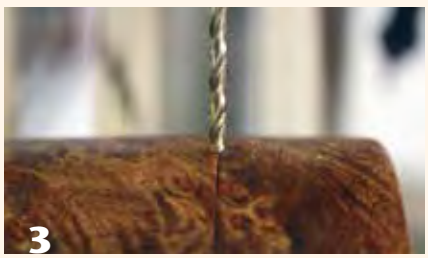
Now a simple turn of the top will "click" the lid into place with the most attractive grain pattern aligned beautifully. Someone suggested a dab of black marker to disguise the pin, but I like the look of the copper dot on the side of the box. ■

Alan Falk has been turning wood for about five years, after getting his start with a class taught by Alan Leland. His work can be seen at plusaf.com/woodshop/woodshop.htm and at a few local craft fairs. Alan, a member of the Woodturners Guild of North Carolina, is happily retired in Raleigh, North Carolina, with his wife Claudia.

Pin material

The copper core of 14/2-gauge electrical wire is a good choice of pin material.

Drill pinhole



Tape the lid to the box securely before drilling. Use a shopmade V-block to hold the round box and then drill a pinhole centered on the box/lid juncture.

Bob Rosand

LIDDED BOX *à la Ed*

Inspired by Ed Moore

On November 9, 2011, I lost a good friend to cancer, and woodturning lost a strong advocate. Ed Moore of Burnt Chimney, Virginia, was a good turner who loved to turn anything that suited his fancy. More important, he loved to promote woodturning locally, often had students in his shop, and frequently sponsored hands-on workshops. Ed was a founding member of the Smith Mountain Lake Woodturners and served as its president and program director for a number of years.

Over the years, I have turned quite a few lidded boxes. The style I became known for was basically an egg shape—think of it as an egg with a lid. It was more artistic than practical, and I wanted to come up with a different style, something more functional. Once while I was visiting Ed, he showed me a box that he had been working on. I wasn't wild about the box; it was dyed blue with gold leaf inside and some pyrography on the rim, but I could see the potential. After Ed died, I was helping to clean and organize Ed's shop and came across that lidded box. I thought I would take it home and work with it. What follows is how I now turn a box inspired by Ed's design. I've made some subtle changes, but in my mind it's still Ed's box.

Turn and hollow the box

Most lidded boxes I make in this style are about 2½" (6cm) in diameter and about 3" (8cm) tall. Start with a straight-grained blank about 6" (15cm) long and 2⅝" (7cm) square. Oak, walnut, maple, and ambrosia maple are all good choices. Mount the blank between centers on the lathe and turn it to a cylinder. Using either a parting tool or a skew on its side (used as a rotary peeler), turn a tenon on each end to fit your chuck.

With the lathe running, use a pencil to mark what will be the lid material, about one-third the blank's length, then part that material from what will be the body of the box (*Photo 1*). You can use a parting tool or cut the blank apart at the bandsaw. If you use a bandsaw, hold the cylindrical blank safely in a V-block, as cutting round objects without a flat surface on the bandsaw table poses a serious risk of a blade catch. Put the lid material aside.

Mount the body material in a chuck, and bring up the tailstock for extra support. Use a roughing gouge to true up the stock and turn it to a diameter of about 2½". Then begin to shape the box profile, using a spindle gouge (*Photo 2*). Start at what will be the top of the box and cut towards the headstock. You are trying to achieve a smooth, gradual curve. Avoid removing too much material from the base of the box because that material provides needed support during hollowing, reducing the likelihood of chatter.

True up what will be the top, or rim, of the box, cutting from outside in (*Photo 3*). You can use either a spindle gouge or the long point of your skew, as you are cutting

Prepare box blank

The box is made from a single blank, initially turned between centers. Form a tenon at both ends and mark the separation between box body and lid. Part off the lid material.

Shape box, true rim

Use a spindle gouge to shape the box's outside profile.

With the tailstock removed, true up the top, or rim, of the box.

Hollow the box

(4) Prior to hollowing, remove waste material by boring with a Forstner bit. I do this in steps, starting with a 1½" bit, then drilling deeper with a 1" bit, and finally a ¾" bit.

(5-6) Hollow the box using a small bowl gouge and round-nose scraper.

across the endgrain. Either one works, but the skew will give you the best finish.

The next step is to hollow the box. Begin by removing most of the material with a drill bit. With the live center removed, I use a 1½" (38mm) Forstner bit to drill about 1" (25mm) deep, then switch to a 1" bit to drill about another inch deeper, followed by a ¾" (19mm) bit. This progression removes excess material quickly and generally follows the tapered profile of the outside of the box (*Photo 4*). The same result can be accomplished by drilling a smaller hole to the approximate desired depth of the box, then hollowing with a spindle gouge or a small bowl gouge. If you haven't done a lot of hollow turning, the "stepped" Forstner bit method lessens the probability of a catch.

I like to use a small bowl gouge to hollow and smooth the interior of the box (*Photo 5*). At the point where you can no longer effectively rub the bevel of the gouge, you will need to shift to a round-nose scraper to finish the inside bottom. My round-nose scraper has the side ground with a bevel (not just the tip), so I can gently scrape the side of the box interior (*Photo 6*). The wall thickness should be about ¼" (6mm).

Note that the lid will not sit on top of the box but fits in a shallow recess just inside. To cut this recess, I use a freshly sharpened square-nose scraper and form a rabbet about ⅛" (3mm) deep (*Photo 7*). Once the rabbet is cut, you can refine the interior of the box further, using both a small bowl gouge and round-nose scraper.

Keep the idea of leverage in mind as you hollow deeper into the box. A lighter-weight tool will have greater tendency to get pulled down, resulting in a catch. I always switch to a heavier and longer round-nose scraper for the deeper cuts, eliminating chatter problems. The other idea to keep in mind is quality of cut. Prior to my final finishing pass, I always resharpen my tool. I also spray the surface of the wood with lacquer to wet the wood, which provides a cleaner cut. Plus, the lacquer dries very quickly and does not load the abrasives when I start to sand. When you are satisfied with the interior, you may want to return to the exterior and refine the shape a bit with your gouge.

Part off box/turn bottom

I use a pencil as a depth gauge to determine the bottom of the box prior to parting. Use the eraser side to keep from marking the finished surface of the interior. Sight across the top of the box and transfer the depth to the outside, marking a bit below where you want the bottom of the box to be.

I initially part in about ¼" to define the bottom and then sand the interior and exterior to about 600-grit abrasive. Then I finish parting the box from the lathe (*Photo 8*).

To turn the bottom of the box, reverse-mount it with a friction fit on a pine or other softwood wasteblock. Pine is a good choice for the wasteblock ▸

because it tends not to mar the finished piece during friction fitting. I use calipers to determine the diameter of the interior of the box and transfer that diameter to the wasteblock (*Photo 9*).

I use a skew chisel to peel down until I have a tenon that will accept the box. This fit needs to be snug but not too tight, or you could crack the box (*Photo 10*). When I have a good fit and the piece runs true, I add a bit of blue painter's tape for added security. The tape will not compensate for a poor fit but does help secure it. Using a spindle gouge, true up the bottom of the box, making it a bit concave (*Photo 11*), and sand to 600 grit. Remove the tape and box body from the wasteblock and put it aside.

Turn the lid

Mount the lid material in the chuck and true it up using a roughing gouge. Then, using a spindle gouge, true up the endgrain surface, which will be the inside of the lid.

Use calipers to measure the largest diameter inside the box body (at the recess) and transfer that diameter to the lid material (*Photo 12*). Lay a sharp skew flat on the toolrest and peel down close to the diameter you have transferred. Check the fit of the lid to the body (*Photos 13, 14*). It should be snug but not too tight. Sanding will loosen the fit just a little.

Next measure the diameter of the box interior just below, or at the base of the recess, and transfer this smaller diameter to the inside of the box lid. Again, lay your skew flat and peel down to that diameter, forming a small notch or rabbet in the inside of the lid (*Photo 15*). Check the fit. The lid should fit in smoothly. The smallest diameter of the lid should fit into the smallest diameter of the box, and the widest diameter of the lid should fit into the widest diameter of the box interior.

Form rabbet

Use a square-end scraper to form a rabbet inside the box rim. This recess will accept the box lid.

Part box from lathe

After gauging the box's inside depth, determine and mark the absolute bottom. Sand the box inside and out, then part it off the lathe.

Friction-fit box to turn bottom

Use a softwood wasteblock to make a jam chuck. Transfer the inside diameter of the box to the wasteblock and form a tenon for a friction fit. This mounting can be reinforced with tape.

Using a sharp tool, gently shape the bottom so it is slightly convex. Sand the bottom.

Define lid diameter

With the lid material mounted in the chuck and trued, use calipers to transfer the box's inside diameter to the lid. Then reduce the lid's diameter until you get a slightly snug fit in the box.

With the box lid still held in the chuck, hold the box body up to it and make a light mark with a pencil (*Photo 16*). This will give a good estimation of the lid's thickness. Remove the box body and use a parting tool to remove excess material to allow access to the top of the lid. A gouge will work for smooth cuts, but I prefer to use the long point of the skew. Periodically check the thickness of the lid. I like to have the top of the lid flush with the top of the box, but it could be recessed a bit if you like. Once you are happy with the thickness of the lid, part it from the lathe.

Next, friction-fit the lid in a waste-block so you can refine the top and drill a small hole for the knob. To friction-fit the lid, cut a recess in a block of soft-wood to accept the lid's diameter. I start with a spindle gouge and then use what I call a friction-fitting tool to form a clean step (*Photo 17*). This tool is nothing more than a square-nose scraper ground at the tip and side (*Photo 18*).

Once the lid fits snugly in the block, use either a spindle gouge or skew to refine the top (*Photo 19*). Then sand the top and drill a ⅛" or 3⁄16" (3mm or 5mm) hole to accept a knob (*Photo 20*). Be careful not to drill all the way through the lid. Remove the lid from the wasteblock and prepare to make a knob. Note: If the lid is fitted tightly in the wasteblock (and it should be) and you attempt to pry it out with your fingers or a tool, you may damage the lid. Simply use a small parting tool to cut into the wasteblock fibers holding the lid in place until the lid comes free.

Turn a knob

I typically make knobs for my boxes out of ebony. I have lots of small scraps lying around that are great for this purpose, but other woods will work as well. Mostly, I like the contrast of the ebony with the lighter woods.

Mount a blank about 3" long and ¾" square in pin jaws and true it up. Use a spindle gouge to shape a knob that suits you and is appropriate for the box you have turned (*Photo 21*). For this style of box, I prefer a simple rounded knob. Once you have the shape you desire, use a small parting tool to cut a tenon that will fit into the hole in the lid. Prior to parting the knob from the lathe, undercut its bottom slightly so it will fit properly on the lid with no gaps. Part the knob, check the fit, and glue it into the lid. ■

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Fit lid to box


15


16

Form a smaller tenon, or step, to clear the box's inside step diameter. This allows the lid to sit down further in the box. With the box held to the lid, mark your desired lid thickness. Remove the box, then part the lid off.

Make a jam chuck for the lid


17


18

In a wasteblock, form a recess that will friction-fit the thin lid for turning and drilling its top surface. I ground a tool just for this purpose.

Turn and drill top of lid


19


20

With the lid friction-fit into the wasteblock, gently refine its top surface. Then drill a small hole to accept a knob.

Turn a knob


21

Turn a knob with a thin tenon at the bottom, sized to match the hole drilled in the lid. Part off the knob and glue it to the lid.