



Arizona Gourds

October updates from the desert southwest...



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Welcome to the October issue of the Arizona Gourds newsletter!

Wow, it's October and almost time for Halloween, the only holiday that celebrates with gourd related vegetables! If you haven't done so already, maybe you should make yourself a permanent Jack-O-Lantern from a gourd! Cut out the face with a mini saw, paint the gourd orange, and then use a battery operated tealight or a corded nightlight bulb to illuminate your "pumpkin", (instructions in the "Tip of the Month" below) and then save it to use over and over again each year!

Here at my house, we usually draw faces on pumpkins with markers and set them out on the low brick wall by our front door. By not cutting them we can leave them out for a much longer time and continue to use them for fall decorations. In the morning when a whole HERD of Javelinas knocked over all our pumpkins and gourds.



This guy ate my pumpkins - and my gourds too!!!

Javelinas, or 'Collared Peccaries', live in the desert wash just below our house. The Collared Peccary is the only wild, native, pig-like animal found in the United States. They are called Javelina (Spanish for javelin or spear) because of their razor-sharp tusks. You may smell a peccary before you see it; they have a strong, musky odor. The prickly pear is ideal food for the Collared Peccary due to its high water content.

Gourd Trivia: I stumbled across this posting from Rick Anderson's blog, the "[Whispering Crane Institute](#)". He had picked this up from [Spiegel](#), a German news outlet. "Bruno Bohrer inspects a Trojan Horse made entirely of pumpkins and gourds on his farm in the German district of Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald. Each fall, he commissions a series of harvest-themed sculptures to attract diners to a restaurant on his farm." **Now picture this made from gourds.....!**



Note: I will be teaching at the Texas Gourd Festival, and will not be shipping orders from October 15th to the 20th. Orders placed during that time will be sent out in the order they were received just as soon as I return.

*Join my class updates list if you want to receive advance notice of classes. Get the news first and have the best opportunity to select your classes!



[Join The Class updates List](#)

Update: Gourd Classes

It's almost time for the classes at the 2009 Lone Star Gourd Festival in Fredericksburg, Texas from October 16-18, 2009. There are still spaces left in several of my classes. Check the [Texas Gourd Society Events page](#) for class descriptions and registration information. (PDF links towards the bottom of the page.)

***Note: I'm trying to visit some new locations, so this is probably the last time I'll be teaching at the Texas festival for a few years. If you are nearby, please plan on attending my classes this year.** Want to plan ahead? Tentative dates for 2010 include another Gourd Retreat at the After Midnight Art Ranch in Sonoita, AZ in April, and classes in the Cape Cod Area in September.

Notice - Wuertz Festival Classes will be posted on the [Wuertz Farm website](#) on Wednesday, September 30th. Signups for the classes will begin on October 1st. (My classes will be held on Thursday, February 4th, and on Sunday, February 7th.)

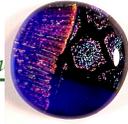
What's new on the [Arizona Gourds website](#)?

Special Glass Giveaway!

Nightlight Kits are back in

During October, I will be giving away some nice large pieces of dichroic glass to some lucky recipients! Every order placed this month will have a chance to win one of these pieces. If your order number matches a randomly selected number, you'll receive one of these in your shipment. **Good luck!**

Winning names will be posted in next month's newsletter.



stock after a long absence! Each kit includes all the parts you need - nightlight fixture, bulb, lampshade clip, a cut and prepared gourd shade, and complete instructions. You'll find them on the [Kits and Displays page](#).

October Feature: Jan MacKay, Gourd Bearer Extraordinaire

If you are a member of the AGS, you probably enjoyed seeing some fabulous beadwork pieces in the last competition. Every one of the winners was just stunning. If that whetted your appetite for trying beads on gourds, then you'll really enjoy seeing the work of Jan MacKay.



From this.....



To this!!! "Faberge Gourd"

Jan was born in Southern California and has lived in many places along the way, including Japan, Hawaii, and Tombstone, Arizona, and she now lives on the central Oregon Coast. She has always been attracted to the arts in many levels, from appreciation to creation. Jan used to do a lot of watercolor paintings, but now has switched her medium to beads. She begins by looking at a gourd and trying to figure out what she wants to create; she is never content to leave the gourd alone, instead feeling the need to enhance what nature started.

Jan has worked on many surfaces including gourds but also other things such as swordfish bills, ostrich eggs or whatever strikes her fancy. She uses beeswax and adds another dimension; sculpting figures out of wax and building them up to suit her ideas or until she is satisfied with what she has sculpted. Then comes the fun part - painting the gourd with a wonderful array of colored seed beads.

Jan uses simple tools - a small wedge for pressing the sheets of beeswax down onto the gourd surface, and a T-pin with a homemade clay handle for setting the beads. She also uses small sculpting tools to shape the wax. She uses sheets of pure beeswax, and beads in sizes 11 and 13. Occasionally she will incorporate small wooden feet or will sculpt polymer clay into items such as animal horns. She finds that it works best to work from the bottom of the gourd up.

Jan notes that the piece always needs to be displayed out of direct sunlight and heat!

If you are lucky, you may find an old copy of the February 2007 issue of "Bead and Button" magazine. This issue had a 4 page featured article about Jan's work - or, you may read it here in [PDF](#) format. You may also read more about Jan and her gourds on her [Blog](#) see her photos on [Flickr](#).



African Rose



Lion Detail - from "African Rose"
This piece took Jan 3 1/2 years to complete.



A Santa theme gourd in progress.



Beaded map on the bottom side of "African Rose"



Buffalo of the Plains in Progress



Jan signs her work with - what else - beads!



Detail of White Buffalo from her current project, "Buffalo Plains".

Many thanks to Jan for granting her permission to use her biography and photos for this article!



New view of the Grand Canyon Gourd on the [Arizona Gourds home page](#).



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Gourd shirts, sweatshirts, mugs and other products in 4 different designs available at my Cafe Press store: <http://www.cafepress.com/ArizonaGourds>

"Lamentations of a Gourd Husband"

A tongue in cheek view from Bob Richie of Kerrville, Texas, who is the husband of gourd artist Judy Richie. I call him the Kerrville Curmudgeon - and I hope he'll reward us with more of his offbeat humor in the future!

In *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri, the author describes a sign above the entrance to Hades that warns "Abandon hope, all ye that enter here." A similar warning should be given to all husbands whose wives say "Honey, I'd like to do a gourd." You, Sir, are doomed.

First of all, gourds, although they look innocent enough, are alien beings that take over the minds of those who fondle them. They become demanding and force the gourd initiates to buy gourds. Oh, just a few at first but the number quickly grows. Gourd purchases are followed by purchases of tools, embellishments, paints, dyes, stains, jim cracks and geejaws, the likes of which you have never seen, and books. The gourds attract addicts from several states, or even internationally, to attend shows, workshops, retreats and gatherings to participate in heathen rituals on non-Euclidian surfaces.

The gourds are indiscriminate in whom they attract. Doctors, lawyers, college professors, teachers, the barely literate, and those of depraved proclivities have all fallen under the spell and become apostles of the gourd. The more imaginative of these will spin off into their own universes to expand their presentations of reality into objects of art that have never been seen. The gourds and gourders communicate with one another and each combination produces different results. Sometimes the gourd does not like what it becomes and demands to be recreated into something that more perfectly reflects its perceived inner gourdness.

The second thing you will need to recognize as a new gourd husband is that you will have several options concerning your shop. The least severe option is that you can learn to share. This is not attractive and you'll have to take on the new mindset that chisels are not meant to be sharp and that tools which once had a proper name are now called "thingies." The next option is that you can build a separate workshop for the budding gourder. Recognize right up front that the first iteration just will not work. You'll want to put in as many shelves as humanly possible so when it comes time to remodel the gourd shop you will not have so many to add. The most severe of the options is that you can quietly abandon your shop and get a new hobby. Tough medicine, a bitter pill, but take it like a man and move on. You'll find that building scrapbooks of gourd events can be quite rewarding. Be sure to get a set of scissors that cut fancy edges.

The third tenet of gourding you need to learn and never violate is that gourds are holy, sacred, items to be revered, coddled, cherished, fondled and fawned over. You never take the name of the gourds in vain. No one has ever, or probably never will utter the phrase "gourd dammit." It is heresy. Such an utterance would cast you into the outer gourdness for sensitivity training and gourd appreciation classes. These can be brutal and defy description in genteel company. Uttering the forbidden phrase at any gourd function would cause widespread "vapors" and righteous indignation. If you are all alone, scrapbooking, you could probably say it under your breath, but I would not risk it.

The fourth new skill you'll have to acquire is taking a genuine interest in the gourder's work. You can offer suggestions, render gentle critique, and carry out a multitude of "Honey get me a ..., and the next time you're at Lowes ... (which really means now)" errands. You can also submit ideas, but if you do recognize that rejection of your genius is common and not intended personally. If you just can't build up a genuine interest you'll have to learn to fake it. However, that will not excuse you from the errands. If asked to critique a piece never give an immediate response. You don't want to give the impression that even in your uninformed opinion something is amiss. You can duck it for the time being by saying "Let me think about that" or "Something bothers me about it but I just can't put my finger on it." Any change should always result in the response "I like that better."

Finally, as the husband of a budding (or even an accomplished) gourder, there is something you should never do. If you fail to heed this warning do so at your own risk. Never, ever say aloud, under your breath, or think "Honey, I'd like to do a gourd."

Reader's Mailbag

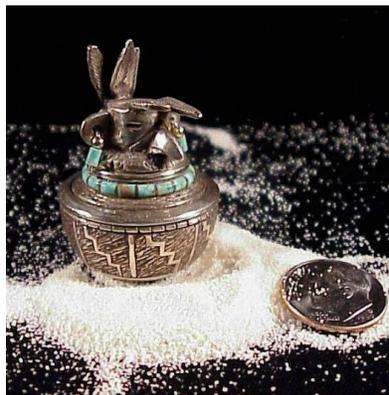
Hi Bonnie - I was lucky to view your albums before your old photo storage site went down. I would love it if we could see your silver work again - I know many others haven't seen that side of you and I reckon they would love to see all that you have done in other art forms.

Cheers - Rita in Kalamazoo Michigan

I would like to see the other art media that you do and I hope you do include a segment every now and then to show us your other talents in arts and crafts. Silver work??? I would love to see silver work please...thanks!

Carrie, MI

I got several other similar requests - so here are some photos of sterling silver pieces I've made using the lost wax casting technique. This is a hobby that requires even MORE tools than gourds, and they are much more expensive as well. I used the large equipment at our parks and rec facilities. I did these before I started on gourds - do you see some similarites?





About lost wax casting:

Each piece is carved from special Jeweler's wax. Wax sprues are attached to the carving, which is then "invested" into a special plaster like material. The hardened investment is placed into a kiln to melt out all the wax, leaving a perfect impression of the piece. Silver and copper are melted in a crucible and poured into the channel formed by the main sprue. The investment is placed into a centrifuge, which distributes the metal into every nook and cranny. Next, the investment is placed into a large bucket of water. The hot investment breaks up and falls away, leaving the silver piece unharmed. Remaining sprues are cut away and the piece is cleaned and polished.

Plains Indian bust cast in bronze.



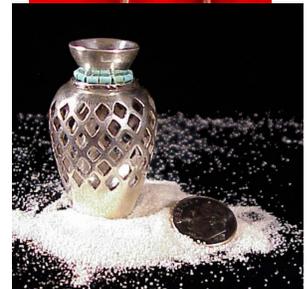
Mudhead figure and pot cast in sterling, Drum is cast in bronze.



Carved turquoise Katsina - surrounding frame cut from sterling silver serving spoon.



Buckles and Bolo Ties - Carved Turquoise with inlays.



Left: Sterling silver gourd with 14K gold Mudheads and accents (Gold from old broken jewelry!)



Right: Tops of Moccasins were cast in "Shibuichi" - a one quarter silver/three quarters copper mix, Soles are silver sheet.



Tip of the Month: Lighting a Gourd Jack-O-Lantern

It's easy to light up a gourd pumpkin or other small gourd projects. This time of year, you will find light cords at craft stores in their holiday section. These cords were designed to light up small ceramic houses and other projects. They have a built in on/off switch which is very handy. A complete light cord set with one bulb usually sells for under \$5 - some sets that have multiple light bulbs will cost more. The larger cord sets have 3 or more bulbs which are great for lighting up several pieces.

Many of these light cords have a metal or plastic clip to hold the fixture in place. Sometimes these are useful, but occasionally it is better to remove the clip and glue the socket into place. Drill a hole on the back side of your project where the emerging lamp cord will be inconspicuous - the hole size will depend on the particular fixture you purchase. (If you place the hole at the bottom, the gourd may not sit level because of interference with the clip or cord.) Be sure that the bulb does not directly touch the gourd, as it will get hot.

Then plug in your fixture and turn the switch, and enjoy your illuminated project!

Don't want to mess with electricity, or there isn't a socket available? In the same holiday area of the craft store (or even in many drugstores), you'll find battery powered tealights. These tealights don't produce as much light, but they do a good job of imitating a flickering candle inside a jack-o-lantern. These are very inexpensive lighting options and very safe.



**Do you have a tip or tutorial we can feature here? Please [contact me](#).*

Reader's Mailbag

Hi Bonnie,

Here are pictures of the gourd I just completed. You included the fused glass cabachon and hematite beads in my pack when I took your carving class, and I saved them for a future project. When I was planning this spider gourd, I immediately thought of the fused glass piece for the spider body.

My husband and I are so fascinated by the orb weaver spiders outside our front door this time of year - each night beautiful new construction of amazing webs. These were the inspiration for this gourd.

I have really enjoyed using the techniques you taught us in class. Thanks again for your great class, and your amazing gourd work. I enjoyed following your stay at the Grand Canyon. Keep up the travelogues!
Mary Gehley - California



Featured Gourd of the Month:

Santa Clara Fetish Bear

This gourd has an added woodcarved fetish bear on the removable, fitted lid. The gourd includes pottery and basketry elements, which are all carved from the gourd. Turquoise heishi and cabochons have been added to the gourd and the fetish bear.

This gourd is available for purchase. Please email me for more information.



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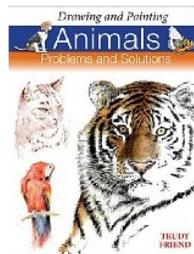
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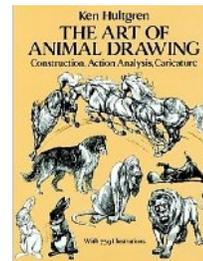
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<http://www.arizonagourds.com/Oct09.html>

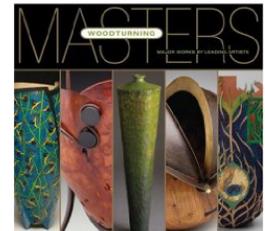
Featured Books of the Month:



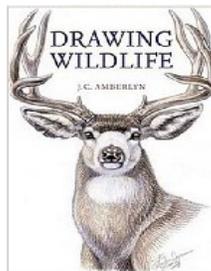
[Drawing and Painting Animals: Problems and Solutions](#)



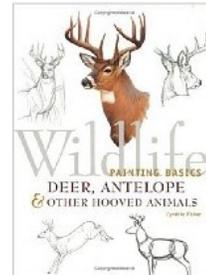
[The Art of Animal Drawing](#)



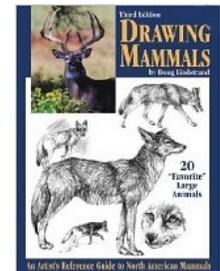
[Masters of Woodturning](#)



[Drawing Wildlife](#)



[Wildlife Painting Basics: Deer, Antelope and other Hooved Animals](#)



[Drawing Mammals](#)

Here are some books for those of you that want to draw your own designs, but need a little help getting started. Even if you always use patterns on your gourds, there may be times where you'll want to do some simple modifications to make the design fit the gourd or to add a bit of creativity.

Often, it's the little details that make your design look realistic and pleasing. Books such as these point out some of those details that you may have missed seeing.

New Masters of Woodturning is great for ideas of contemporary designs on woodturned vase shapes. I've gotten lots of great ideas from woodturners.

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