April 2017 - Chris Foweraker

We've probably all had a go at turning fruit. Tonight Chris showed us how to turn apples and pears properly.

Pear out of beech …

Top Tip 1 - as with all fruit, observation of the real thing helps to create a good result. In this case, whilst pears like apples have an indent on the bottom they have no indent on the top. When I heard this I was panicking for the rest of the evening as I had prepared a number of of pears for the North Somerset Arts Week which was starting the next day and I wasn't sure that I had noted this when making my own pears!

Chris uses a friction chuck (described below) to complete the turning of fruit. This has a hole right through into which a round ended stick can be inserted both to help centralise the fruit when inserted and also to free the fruit when finished.

The top three quarters of the pear was completed including sanding etc whilst supported by the headstock and tailstock in the conventional way and then inserted into the friction chuck so that indent in the bottom could be turned and the bottom quarter sanded and finished.

With the pear removed drill a hole at a slight angle in the top of the pear to take either a homemade stalk out of, say, laburnum or a dried actual stalk from a pear. With the bottom drilled centrally insert a clove to finish off the pear.

Friction chuck …

Chris makes several sizes of friction chuck to suit different sizes of fruit. The same size could be used for both apples and pears but Chris suggested that smaller sized apples were more attractive. Oak, ash and beech are suitable materials out of which to make a friction chuck.

The steps to making the friction chuck were …

- Turn the blank to round using a spindle roughing gouge
- Turn a spigot to suit the chuck
- Remove and reverse the piece into the chuck

- Square off what will be the open end and mark the required size of opening
- Use a forstner bit to drill part through (c500rpm) i.e to sufficient depth to take the top part of a piece of fruit

Top Tip 2 - at this stage it was discovered that there was a crack in the wood which Chris filled with superglue. The tip is to make sure that the superglue is fully set before turning the lathe back on.

- Hollow out using a bowl gouge on the bottom wing to ensure a cut and not a scrape creating about a 5 to 7.5 degree taper
- Complete the hole through using a drill appropriate for the diameter of the dowel to be used

Top Tip 3 - when removing a piece of work from the chuck mark on the piece the position of Jaw1 so that it can be replaced in the chuck in the same position.

Apple out of beech …

- Round off down to size to fit the friction chuck to be used
- Mark a 2/5th line to indicate the maximum diameter point
- Sand and blend each end into the main body and then put sanding sealer (cellulose sanding sealer diluted 50/50) on each protruding end - wiping surplus off immediately
- Repeat for the other end

Top Tip 4 - when turning the indents make sure that the tool pressure is central - side pressure could cause the piece to move or even jump out of the friction chuck.

- Drill end holes as for the pear and then support the apple at both ends into the end holes and apply sealer to the rest of the body
- Finally, insert stalk and clove

Thanks to Chris for this straightforward and methodical explanation of the fruit making process. I certainly will now be able to enhance the appearance of my next batch of apples and pears.

David Langan