



Greater Vancouver Woodturners Guild

130th chapter of the
American Association of Woodturners



Newsletter

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AAW News

Art Liestman

The Grey-Bruce Woodturners of Ontario became the 140th AAW chapter in November and are the sixth Canadian chapter. In January, a club in Rochester, New York became the 141st (and currently the newest) chapter.

As of December, AAW membership applications and renewals can be done securely through their online membership form at www.woodturner.org. You can also buy various videotapes, publications and AAW logo items such as shirts, smocks, hats, and mugs from the AAW. Unfortunately, these can't be bought online yet. However, this is expected in the near future. In the interim, if you want to order something, call (651) 484-9094 with a credit card or send an order by mail to 3499 Lexington Ave. N., Suite 103, Shoreview, MN 55126.

The AAW is planning to put together a CD archive of back issues of *American Woodturner*.

January 26, 2000 Meeting:

Focus on Fundamentals –
Don Hoskins – Mounting Systems for
Woodturning (starts at 6:30 p.m.)

Main Speaker – Derek Luder –
Wood Identification

This is great news, particularly since many of the back issues are no longer available.

The Visual Context of Wood

Amie Hillaby

Much of our enjoyment of woodworking comes from picking the “perfect” piece of wood to use in a given situation. Often this judgement is based on the look of the wood above all else. Unfortunately, the terminology involved can be a little overwhelming. I hope this article will give you a better feel for some of the terms that go along with selecting fine woods.

A good overall description of the visual context of wood is **figure**². Figure is a combination of factors, which can be basically boiled down to **colour, grain, lustre and cut**.

Colour – The colour of wood starts as the tree grows and lays down pigments in the cells of the wood and absorbs minerals from the soil. Once the tree is dead, colour can also changed as the wood is broken down. Probably one of the most interesting causes of colouring in wood is **spalting**.¹ Spalting occurs only in dead, rotting wood. The molds that cause spalting prefer conditions with fairly high humidity and cool temperatures.¹ This obviously occurs rather readily on a West Coast forest floor. In a hot climate, such as in the Amazon or Australia, the ideal conditions for spalting are much rarer,

and thus it is unusual to find spalted tropical hardwoods.

When working with a piece of spalted wood, you'll probably notice dark lines running throughout it. These lines are where the most active mold grows during rotting, and they provide a "no-cross" zone which prevent other mold or bacteria from attacking the wood.¹ Usually, one side of this boundary is soft and spongy while the other side is harder. Selecting a functional piece of spalted wood is a trick, since you want the beautiful colouring and patterning created by the spalting process without the total loss of structural integrity that eventually occurs from decay.¹

Grain – One of the most diverse aspects of wood figure is grain. Grain can be defined as the how the wood fibres run relative to vertical axis of the tree (up and down).² Most woodworkers recognize the term **straight** grain (parallel to the growth of the tree) but the more spectacular examples of figure occur when the wood fibres are short and change direction many times over the length of the wood.² Other types of grain include **spiral**, **interlocked**, **wavy**, **curly** and **irregular** (Fig. 1.)

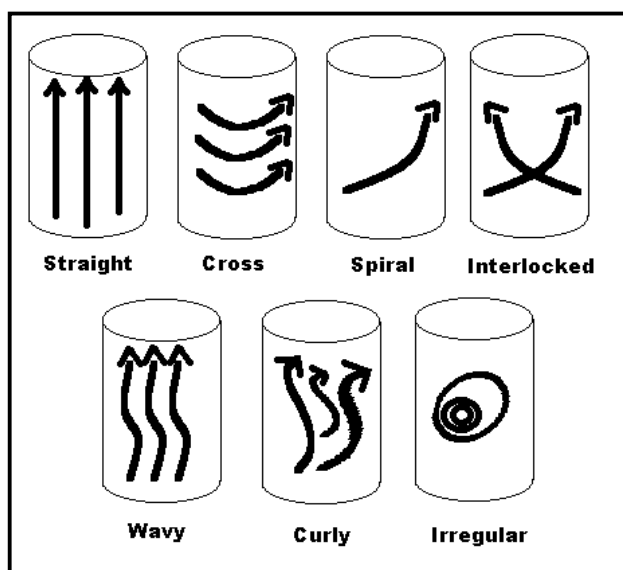


Fig. 1. – Different wood grains

Combinations of these grain growth patterns create what woodworkers usually refer to as the "figuring" in wood^{2,3}:

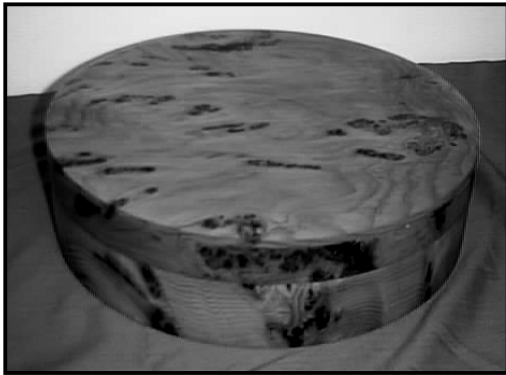
- ◆ **Ribbon Stripe** – Produced from interlocked grain. The alternating right- and left-hand spirals of interlocked grain create a ribbon effect in the figure. A special type of ribbon stripe, called **roey**, occurs when the stripes are very short (i.e., not running the length of the board) and close together.
- ◆ **Broken Stripe & Mottle** – Produced from a combination of interlocked (the predominant grain type in broken stripe figuring) and wavy grains (the predominant in mottle figuring).
- ◆ **Bee's Wing** – An exceptional figuring created from very narrow spacing between interlocked grain combined with very tight wavy or curly grains.
- ◆ **Fiddleback** – Shallow interlocked grain combined with particularly uniform and tight wavy or curly grains.
- ◆ **Quilted** – Basically large "rolls" of curly grain.



*Curly maple salad bowl
(approx. 16" dia.) – John Bese*

- ◆ **Bird's Eye** – Normally localized, this spectacular grain, as the name implies, looks like a bird's eye, and is created from curly and irregular grains.

- ◆ **Burls or Burling** – Irregular grain that grows in all sorts of chaotic directions. These may start around bark inclusions or injuries caused to the growing tree or may be caused by large tumor-like growths.



*Douglas Fir burl jewelry box
(approx. 12" dia.) – Darcy Wardrop*

- ◆ **Quartersawn Fleck or Tigerstripe** - This figuring type is actually caused by **medullary rays** or “cells radiating outward from the centre of the tree”,³ and is, as the name implies, best shown when quartersawn.
- ◆ **Crotch or Feather** – Curly and wavy grain that comes from the “crotch” of a tree, where two limbs diverge. The best feathering or crotch grain is found when the limbs are of similar diameter.

Here are some examples of some woods that are known for their exotic figuring³:

- ◆ Maple and Walnut – quilting, feather crotch, curly, fiddleback, bird’s eye (Maple), burl
- ◆ Mahogany, Bubinga, Satinwood and Sapele – ribbon stripe, broken stripe, mottle, bee’s wing (Satinwood)
- ◆ White Oak, Red Oak and Lacewood – tigerstripe

Lustre – This is a characteristic of figure that is often incorrectly thought of as the ability of the wood to accept polish or high-gloss finish², although finishing techniques can enhance the

lustre of a piece. Lustre is actually a function of the wood cells’ ability to refract light.² Fine textured woods (“tight grained”) and woods with short grain (especially curly, wavy or irregular grains) are usually higher in lustre. The cut of the wood also affects the lustre, and quartersawn woods often display the best lustre.²

Cut – The only real man-made criteria of wood figure is the cut of the wood.² There are basically three cuts that you can achieve:

- ◆ **Flatsawn** – Boards are cut tangential to the growth rings of the tree² (Fig. 2.). This cut causes the growth rings to run “flat” and parallel along the length of the board. Woods that are flatsawn display the grain in large, long loops, sometimes running the entire length of the board. White and red oak, rosewood, walnut and teak are woods that are popularly flatsawn for this figure effect.² Quilted figure wood is also better displayed with a flatsawn cut.³
- ◆ **Quartersawn** – Planks are cut perpendicular to the growth rings of the tree, which achieves a “cross grain” effect such that the growth rings are running at 90° to the length of the plank² (Fig. 2.). Most of the spectacular figuring that occurs from interlocked, curly, wavy and irregular grains is best displayed when the wood is quartersawn.³

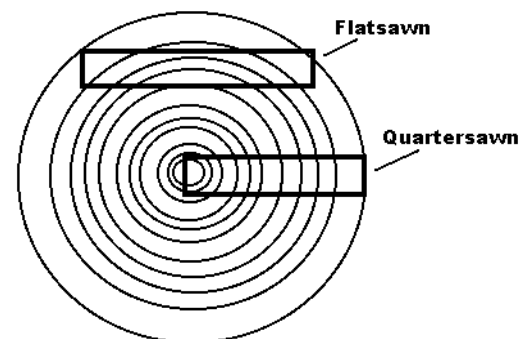


Fig. 2. – Flatsawn and Quartersawn Boards

◆ **Peeling** – This cut is usually done on a lathe and is used to create veneers and plywoods. There are different ways of peeling a log in order to take advantage of the figure of the wood and to make the best use of the log.²

The **location** of the cut also affects the figure of the wood. Feather crotch figured wood is planked starting from the centre of the tree, then working outward to either side of the centre, whereas fiddleback figure becomes stronger away from the centre of the tree. Both flatsawn and quartersawn boards have varying qualities depending on where they are cut from the log.³

Of course, you don't need to know all these terms to be a great woodworker. Indeed, if you go into your local wood supplier, he may give you a blank stare if you use one or more of them. But knowing them helps you to understand what an unfinished piece will look like with a 600 grit finish to it.

References

- ¹ Lacer, Alan. "Spalted Wood". December 1999. *American Woodworker*, No. 77. RD Publications, Inc. New York, USA. pp 50-53.
- ² Lincoln, William A. *World Woods in Colour*. 1996. Linden Publishing Inc., California, USA. pp 9-11.
- ³ McClure, Paul L. "Wild Wood!" February 1999. *American Woodworker*, No. 71. RD Publications, Inc. New York, USA. pp 48-51.

The classification of the grain types is from Lincoln, and the classification of the combinations of grain types to create "figuring" is from McClure.

Visiting Other Chapters

Art Liestman

Early this month, I had occasion to go to San Francisco to attend a conference – for work, not woodturning. However, I knew that there were several AAW chapters in the area and thought if I was lucky, I might be able to attend a meeting. It turns out that THREE Bay Area chapters meet during the second week of the month. I tried to contact all three by email and received responses from two – the West Bay

Woodturners who meet in Hillsdale and the Redwood Empire Woodturners who meet in Santa Rosa. Both were happy to invite me to attend as a guest and the Redwood Empire group even offered me a place to stay overnight! Unfortunately, the other local group met while I was flying down, so I missed the chance to attend all three meetings in one week.

After my conference ended on Tuesday, I hopped on a commuter train from San Francisco to Hillsdale and was met by Linda Salter, the President of the West Bay Woodturners. We went straight to the high school shop where they meet and helped unload some wood for the raffle. I was pleased to see Woodrow the Robot – the West Bay chapter's entry in last year's Chapter Collaborative Challenge – in attendance at the meeting. The members were all very friendly and many mentioned their previous visits to BC. The program that night was a "hands-on". They had four lathes and two grinders set up. Some of the club's more experienced members did simultaneous demonstrations of tools and techniques and the other members were invited to try them. They had a nice show and tell. For me, one of the highlights was a bowl turned from palm – one of their local woods!

Their President's challenge for the month was to make something that would fit within a 2-inch cube. The members responded with some very nice small bowls, hollow forms, and goblets. I had a great time and was happy to win a piece of wood in the raffle. (I chose the smallest piece that they had left since I had to pack it into my suitcase for the return trip.)

I spent the next day working with a colleague until mid afternoon and then hopped on a bus for the trip north over the Golden Gate Bridge, through Marin County and into Sonoma County. Julian Shaw, a professional turner and the previous President of the Redwood Empire Woodturners met me at the bus station. We went directly to Pete Samson's house (the

current President) and enjoyed a meal of pizza and salad as the chapter's executive met. After the dinner and meeting, we went to Andy Cohen's house for the meeting. (They meet in various members' shops.) Again, I was royally welcomed and had a great evening. One of the show and tell highlights was a laminated walnut and maple bowl which was carved with spiral flutes from rim to base – very nice, but hard to describe, I'm afraid. Another highlight was a \$4000 Alembic bass guitar that was just off the assembly line. (One of their members makes these at his day job.) The meeting topic for the night was of special interest to me – a demonstration of the Stubby 750 lathe. Andy Cohen (our host for the evening) wrote about the Stubby in the most recent issue of *American Woodturner*. As the first North American owner of a Stubby (other than John Jordan who imports them), he was well qualified to show us the various advantages of this innovative new lathe. Again, I won a piece of wood in the raffle and selected the smallest remaining item. This was another great evening with interesting and friendly people.

So, if you are travelling, check to see if a local club is meeting while you are in the area. All of the local chapters are listed at the AAW website and in my experience, they are very good to guests.

Upcoming Events

Art Liestman

Bonnie Klein is coming to the GVWG to present a seminar and teach hands-on classes in April. Bonnie is an internationally known woodturner and lathe manufacturer based in the Seattle area. We are very excited to be able to bring her in as our first special event.

The current plan is for Bonnie to present a seminar on the evening of Friday, April 14th and to teach hands-on classes on Saturday, April 15th and Sunday, April 16th. More details and prices will be announced shortly.

Regional Show - Doug Wharton of the Puget Sound Woodworking Center (in Everett, Washington) is planning a regional turning symposium in May. I got an email from Doug saying that Martin Pidgen (from England) and Martin Thorn (from BC) will be among the demonstrators. He says they will try to ensure that it is affordable for turners in the region to attend the show. Stay tuned for more information!

Shear Scraping on the Cheap!

Art Liestman

There was an interesting recent thread on rec.crafts.woodturning concerning making your own shear scrapers. I'll summarize here.

Begin with a one inch (or so) spindle gouge of the nearly flat variety – sometimes called continental gouges. The gouge can be high-speed steel or carbon steel. Several of the contributors suggested that Sears (Craftsman) gouges are ideal for this, as they are cheap. Turn the gouge upside down (so that it's an upside-down "U") and grind it to a fingernail shape with about a 45-degree bevel on what is now the underside. The new bevel is on the **INSIDE** of the "U", rather than on the outside with the standard gouge. You now can use the tool as a shear scraper.

To see an example of a 1 1/2" firmers gouge converted to a shear scraper, go to:

[\[web.com/woodturning/scaper.html\]\(http://web.com/woodturning/scaper.html\)**.](http://www.maine-</u></p></div><div data-bbox=)**

PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE

Remember your **EGGS**
for January's meeting!

February 23, 2000

Annual General Meeting

Vote for your executive for 2000!

The executive positions we're voting for are President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Member at Large.

CLASSIFIEDS

LATHE FOR SALE: Record Power Mini-Lathe (RPML-300) with stand, handle set, indexing attachment and drilling attachment all for US\$300. There is nothing wrong with the lathe; I've simply upgraded to a heavier spindle lathe. Contact Fred Holder: TEL: 360-387-0349 or E-Mail: fred@fholder.com or woodturner950@aol.com.

CONTAINER CO-OP PRICING: We are offering a coop buying opportunity to turning and woodworking groups and selected customers interested in wholesale purchasing at a minimal investment approx. every 3 months. We are bringing in a container of exotic lumber & turning stock from a European sawmill and this opportunity is being offered in order to fill the container.

To qualify for these prices, items must be ordered within the next few weeks for our container, which is leaving in the beginning of February and arriving to our location in the first week of March. There are approx. 25 species to choose from:

- ◆ Cocobola turning blocks 2"x5"x5", 5"x5"x5", 3"x8"x8", 4/4 and 8/4 Cocobola lumber - any of these items offered at US\$8.00 per bd. ft.
- ◆ Bocote at US\$7.00
- ◆ Amboyna burl (custom cut), Thuya burl, snakewood, lignum vitae, ebony and balsawood, just to name a few.

Contact me if you are interested and I will send you the entire listing. To offer these wholesale deals we are requiring minimum orders of US\$500, minimum US\$250 per species. These prices are substantially lower than the prices we offer on our website. We can ship these items anywhere in the US or Canada which would arrive to you in 2 to 7 days thereafter depending on your location.

Contact: Rob Pelc
 Advantage Trim & Lumber Co.
 TEL: (716)-827-3915
<http://AdvantageLumber.com/>

!!HELP!!

In order to make our organization work, we need **everyone's** participation. Find a neat thing to do and help out!

Here are some areas that we always need help:

Newsletter – writers, contributors, ideas
 (Amie Hillaby – 469-0221
amiemh@dowco.com)

Focus on Fundamentals – ideas, presenters
 (Bruce Campbell – 469-0221
bruce.campbell@telus.com)

Main Speakers – ideas, presenters
 (Fred Baldwin – 224-5788
fbaldwin@direct.ca)

Raffle – donations of tools, wood, etc.
 (John Bese – 581-8807
johnbese@home.com)

Library – donations of books & videos
 (Dave Armatage – 936-0705)

Meeting Wranglers – setup, takedown, cleanup

Offer your assistance at the meetings.

Collaborative Challenge – “Fast Ferry Project”

Watch for announcements in the newsletter!
 Call Bruce Campbell to get involved.