

The Turning Point

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The next meeting of the Nova Woodturners' Guild
will be held at Lee Valley Tools, 150 Susie Lake Crescent, Halifax
Sunday, October 4, 2026 at 2:00 PM

At the October meeting:
Christmas ornaments
Walnut and structural screws
Show and tell

The President's Report

Once again fall has arrived with thoughts of what to turn for the holiday season. When you stop to think about it the busy season will be here before you know it. Getting to the approaching holidays and gift ideas, this months demo might be something you would want to turn. Dave McLachlan will be turning a Christmas Ornament using some interesting techniques involving a pin vice and some hollowing tools.

Speaking of Dave, at last months meeting he presented us with a challenge to turn a traditional Scottish spurtle using just a skew. I have to admit that using a skew is not one of my favorite tools when working on a lathe, but I know that it is something that takes time to get comfortable with and this exercise certainly did that. I decided to practice on a piece of softwood and had more than one catch when turning the piece. Below is a picture of my practice piece and you'll have to wait until Sunday to see my cherry spurtle.



See you on Sunday and happy turning.

Bob Earle – President

Notes from the September Meeting

Unfortunately, the notes from the last meeting were not available at press time; we hope to have the September meeting notes (as well as the October meeting notes) in the November newsletter.

However, intrepid Guild photographer Chris did supply the following images for the newsletter. Those of you who were there will understand all of them implicitly.

— Editor



Bob starting things off with a somewhat serious look on his face.



Some photos of Gary's pen-turning talk and demonstration.



Gary holding the finished pen.



Dave showing off some spurtles he turned.



Mark showing off some of his turnings, although the last one looks suspiciously flat.



Mark setting a new NWG record for the longest show-and-tell turning.
Bob and Bill cheerfully displaying some recent works.
A more serious Dave showing off one of his weapons.

Wax Finish — One Version

This was prompted by SWMBO¹ who liked the turnings but not “that stinky stuff” that I was using for a finish. Before you ask, they were all “stinky”. I decided that since Richard Raffan, Steven Kennard and many others used wax as a finish, I’d try it too.

First, a bit of research.

The types of wax available:

- **Animal:**
stearic acid
- **Insect:**
beeswax, shellac wax, stearic acid
- **Mineral:**
ceresin wax, microcrystalline wax, montan wax, ozokerite wax, paraffin wax (macrocrystalline wax),
- **Vegetable:**
bayberry wax, candelilla wax, carnauba wax, japan wax, ouricury wax, palm wax, soy wax

Description of common types:

- **Beeswax** is produced by worker bees (*Apis Melifera*). It is an insect wax that is found on all continents of the globe. Beeswax is extracted by melting or boiling of the honeycomb; the crude wax is then skimmed from the top. The yellow color of the wax is a function of the type of flower producing the pollen, as well as the age of the hive. Beeswax melts in a range, typically between 62°C to 65°C (144°F to 149°F). To prevent discoloration and loss of its sweet aroma, it’s best to heat it gently with a double boiler, ideally keeping temperatures below 77°C (170°F). White beeswax is obtained by bleaching the naturally yellow product.

Beeswax is compatible with most vegetable, mineral and animal oils.

- **Carnauba wax** comes solely from northeastern Brazil, where it is obtained from the leaves of the palm tree *Copernicia Cerifera*, also known as the “tree of life”. The wax is produced by the fan shaped leaves of this tree, and protects the leaves from dehydration in the severe weather conditions near the equator. Harvesting of these leaves is done in the dry months (September through February). The leaves are cut and left to dry in the sun, and the wax is then scraped off.

Carnauba wax is the hardest of natural waxes, and this property dictates most of its applications. Carnauba wax is often used in combination with softer waxes to achieve optimal aesthetics. It has one of the highest melting points among natural waxes, between 82°C to 86°C (180°F to 187°F), which makes it stable in high temperatures.

¹ She Who Must Be Obeyed

It's compatible with most animal, vegetable, and mineral waxes and is available in a variety of grades, which vary in color.

- **Paraffin waxes** are comprised primarily of straight-chain hydrocarbons. They are refined by solvent extraction into a variety of grades, classified by melt point and feature a macrocrystalline structure (large, brittle crystals).

Paraffin wax is known for its high purity, excellent gloss, and low odor. It has thermoplastic and water repellent properties and is often used in barrier coatings. It also has one of the highest melting points among natural waxes, between 82°C to 86 °C (180°F to 187 °F), which makes it stable in high temperatures.

Other components used:

- **Mineral oil** is a clear, colorless, and odorless liquid derived from petroleum.

Heavy and light mineral oil differ primarily in viscosity and density. This difference is not the result of using solvents.

Light mineral oil is a thin, clear, odorless liquid with low viscosity, commonly used for skin moisturizing, mechanical lubrication, and household tool care. It works as a clean honing oil for sharpening stones and prevents rust on steel blades.

Heavy mineral oil is a thick, odorless, and colorless liquid with high viscosity, commonly used as an oral lubricant laxative, skin emollient, and wood or mechanical lubricant.

- **Diatomaceous earth** is made from the fossilized remains of tiny, aquatic organisms called diatoms. Their skeletons consist of hydrated silicon dioxide (opal/opaline silica). Over a long period of time, diatoms accumulated in the sediment of rivers, streams, lakes, and oceans. Today, silica deposits are mined from these areas.

Mohs hardness: individual microscopic shells (natural) rate around 4.5 to 5.5. Calcined (heat-treated) diatomaceous earth can reach a hardness of 5.5 to 6.5 as the amorphous silica converts into harder crystalline forms like cristobalite.

So, where where do we go from here? Of all the formulations I found, for my purposes it came down to two or three recipes.

Sanding wax (by weight):

- 1 part beeswax
- 4 parts mineral oil
- Melt together in a wide mouth container. Place a small amount on the sandpaper and sand as normal. This keeps the sanding dust under control.

Abrasive Wax (by weight):

- 1 part beeswax
- 1 part diatomaceous earth

- 4 parts mineral oil
- Melt together in a wide mouth container. Apply a small amount to a soft cloth or paper towel and hold to the spinning work. This acts as a very fine sandpaper and produces a smooth finish.

The final touch is a wax crayon held against the spinning work. A soft cloth is then held against the work until friction melts and polishes the wax.

Hard wax sticks (by weight):

- 1 part beeswax
- 1 part carnauba wax

A softer version of the wax stick:

- 2 parts beeswax
- 2 parts carnauba wax
- 1 part mineral oil

Final Notes:

- Avoid breathing in diatomaceous earth, as fine silica dust can hurt your lungs. Please wear a mask when using it.
- For practical purposes the abrasive wax will also act as sanding wax. The fine abrasive won't matter.
- Due to the risk of fire, when melting wax always use a double-boiler setup, and don't use an open flame to heat the water.

Let's stay safe and have fun.

Norm Jolivet

Note: Norm tells me that he used heavy mineral oil for his recipes, but that was what was in stock locally; either would work. — Editor

Video of the Month

Put down your hot drink before you check out this **very short** video. You have been warned.

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1556771545719053>

DaveM's Fireside Chat

Welcome to Fall; this month's demo is on making Christmas ornaments and will be given by myself. This month's demo will include some bonus materials, two umbrella branch blanks, (walnut & sumac) and a GRK #10 $\times$ 3-1/8" structural screw to make the screw chuck for every participant. This ornament demo is very timely as we announce the 2026 Annual Christmas Ornament Challenge. You can enter up to 5 items, and they will be displayed at Lee Valley from November 22 until our Xmas Social date. The last day for submission will be November 22, with submission days as follows: the November meeting date, Saturday the 14th of November, and November 21 and 22. I hope everyone will participate this year.

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On to the technical side of this chat, I thought I would give some information on actually making an umbrella ornament so you can have a guide to their production. There are two main methods for making them and I will discuss both. The first uses a screw chuck and the second uses a pin mandrel and a special collar mandrel, which speeds up production if you are making a large number of ornaments.

To make the screw chuck you will need a 2 1/4" thick $\times$ 3" blank. Mount it between centers and turn it round and make a foot/shoulder that will accommodate your 4 jaw chuck (or mount the blank to a small faceplate).

Next mount your blank in your chuck and face it off so it is dead flat and true up the outside diameter with a few light planing passes with your skew. Mount a 4mm or 9/64" drill bit in the tailstock and bore a hole right through the block. Unmount the blank from the chuck and screw in the GRK #10 $\times$ 3 1/8" structural screw; it helps to grind off the point, so it is safer when you are turning your piece. The finished screw chuck should look like Figure 1.

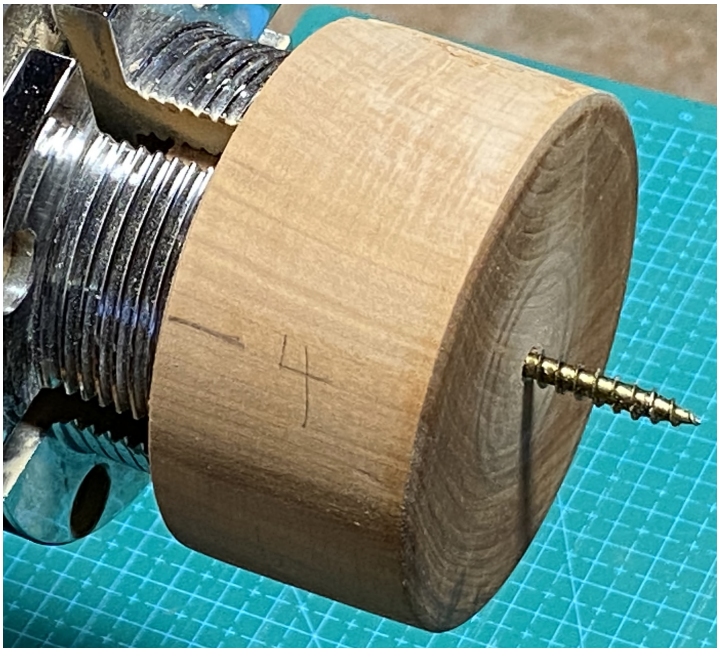


Figure 1. The finished screw chuck mounted in a 4 jaw chuck.

Next you will take your branch blank and drill a 4mm or $\frac{9}{64}$ " hole in the center of it to facilitate mounting on the screw chuck. The blank is mounted first with the curved face towards the screw chuck (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Mount your branch blank so that the live edge faces the faceplate.

Then turn the outside of the dome to a pleasing shape with a small spindle or bowl gouge (Figure 3), and sand and finish the outside.



Figure 3. Turn and finish the outside of the blank being careful not to hit the screw.

Remove the blank from the chuck and reverse it on the screw as in Figure 4. (It helps to use some folded over shop towel between the blank and the face of the screw chuck to prevent damage to the finished surface).



Figure 4. Reverse the blank on the screw chuck with some folded shop towel to protect the finished surface.

Next begin to hollow out the inside of the ornament, be careful to leave about a $\frac{1}{2}$ " post around the screw as you hollow it out to prevent damage to your tools and hands (Figure 5). Take the wall thickness down to at least $\frac{3}{16}$ ". Carefully sand the inside surface and finish it. Unmount the blank and snap off the central post and pare it down with a small chisel.



Figure 5. Hollow out the inside leaving a post around the screw to protect your hands and tools.

Next make a finial; I like to use a threaded connector between the top finial and the bottom finial to facilitate mounting the finials through the hole in the umbrella. I use 4mm snap off cabinet hardware bolts to accomplish this. See Figure 6 for the completed ornament.



Figure 6. Once finished attach the finials with a threaded bolt section or dowel pin.

There is another way to make these umbrella ornaments using a pin mandrel, which is a bit faster than using a screw chuck. To do this you first need a $\frac{5}{8}$ " pin mandrel, mounted in your headstock. Bore out your blank to within $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the bottom of the branch blank (Figure 7). Your blank should now look like Figure 8.



Figure 7. Using a drill press and a $\frac{5}{8}$ " Forstner bit drill almost to the bottom of the branch blank.



Figure 8. The completed hole should look like this.

Once drilled, mount the blank so that there is a small gap between the end of the mandrel and the bottom of the hole; this allows you to drill a 6mm hole (using a drill bit mounted in the tailstock) without hitting the end of the mandrel with the drill. Once the drilling is complete the blank can be fully engaged with the mandrel.



Figure 9. The blank just starting to be pressed onto the mandrel to show the position of the locking pin.

Bring up a live center into the 6mm hole and turn the outside of the ornament as in Figure 10, using a small bowl or spindle gouge. Complete the outside of the ornament and finish as in Figure 11.



Figure 10. The branch blank being shaped on the mandrel with a live center in place.



Figure 11. The outside of the ornament completed and finished.

Now reverse the ornament and attach it to a small mandrel with a 6mm through bolt using a brass $\frac{5}{8}$ " round nut seen in Figures 12 & 13.



Figure 12. A custom built mandrel with a $\frac{5}{8}$ " shaft and 6mm through bolt and a $\frac{5}{8}$ " threaded round brass nut.



Figure 13. The mandrel mounted in the headstock showing the position of the brass nut.

Mount the mandrel in an ER collet holder in the headstock as seen in Figure 13 and hollow out the inside surface being careful not to hit the brass retaining ring to the bottom of the ring as seen in Figure 14. Sand and finish the inside surface then attach the finials . . . Figure 15.



Figure 14. Hollow out the inside to the bottom of the brass nut, being careful to avoid hitting the brass nut.

Figure 15. Attach the finials to the finished umbrella for a live edged ornament.



Cover Photo

Another ornament made by Dave McLachlan. This one is made of sumac, which, as far as your humble editor knows, is not a wood often seen at NWG show-and-tells.



Photo Credits

Thanks to Chris Palmer for photos from last month's meeting. The other photos were (as far as the editor knows!) all taken by the person who made the item in question and/or the person who wrote the article.

Nova Woodturners' Guild 2026/27 Executive

All members of the executive, as well as committee chairs, can be reached by using the email address associated with that position. That is, a note sent to (for example) the president will go to whomever is president at that time. The following <address>es should be followed by @novawoodturnersguild.com to send mail to the person holding that position.

A 'C' after a committee member's name indicates they are chair of that committee.

Position	<address>	Incumbent(s)
Executive	executive (sends the message to all executive positions on the list)	
President	president (or) pres	Bob Earle
Vice President	vice-president (or) vp	Bill Maes
Secretary	secretary	Calum Ewing
Treasurer	treasurer	Dave McLachlan
Director at Large	director1	Mark Hazen

Committees

Library	library	Jim Diamond Brian Sharp	C
Web Site	webmaster	Richard Ford	C
Membership & Promotion	membership	vacant	
Newsletter	newsletter (or) news	Jim Diamond	C
Competition	competition	Bill Maes	C
Guild Photographer	photographer (or) photos	Chris Palmer	C
Fund Raising		Gary Landry	C
Members Group	members	members	

The [members](#) address forwards the email to all members who have signed up to be on the [members list](#). To add or remove yourself from the [members](#) list, email webmaster@novawoodturnersguild.com.

If you wish to send an email to all current members of the NWG, send your message to secretary@novawoodturnersguild.com with a request to forward your email to all members.