

Newbie Notes by Ed Karch

I just finished my first year as a turner so this is my take on how to get started in this fantastic craft/art.

How to get started

Lessons are best but books and videos also work. I did the Fairfax County adult education courses. There are also the courses at Woodcraft in Springfield. Get a mentor from the CAW mentor program. Practice, practice, practice. Take your questions to <http://www.woodcentral.com/newforum/turning.shtml>. This is a message board filled with nice polite folks that have centuries of turning experience and will take on any question.

Once you are turning

How do you get feedback? My approach was to attend the CAW skill enhancement sessions. I didn't go to turn but to observe. I would take in a box of stuff and pick a couple of the instructors whose designs I liked in the show and tell at the monthly meeting. This way you can get the real tough critique that you need to improve. If you can't make it to skill enhancement, then grab your critic at the monthly meeting and ask them to judge a piece for you. You won't get a critique at the show and tell in front of the entire group, be happy. Another possibility is to post a picture on the wood central wood turning forum and ask for an honest critique. If you don't ask for a critique all you will get is encouragement and complements.

What are you turning?

Are you buying wood or turning road kill? I prefer the road kill route both for the environmental benefits and I am too cheap to pay for wood when there is mega cubic meters of wood cut in this area each day. The classic way to turn green wood is to rough out your piece then let it dry for a year before finish turning. This is fine if you have been turning for several years. If you are like me, any thing you turned six months ago goes into the firewood pile as not worth finishing. There is a way to speed this up to about a couple of weeks between rough and finish. Check out this article for more information, http://www.woodcentral.com/cgi-bin/readarticle.pl?dir=turning&file=articles_473.shtml. This works. I have been using this method for two months and only lost one rather thick beech bowl.

Where are you going?

There are many things to turn and many ways to do it. Get into every workshop and view every demo you can. Try every thing you can. Think outside the box. Color outside the lines. (Attend the national symposium, you will be amazed what you see and experience, Editor).