

OUR SEPTEMBER DEMONSTRATION

YOU CAN TAKE THAT TO THE BANK-SIA

WITH **MIKE GRIDLEY**

Members and guests of the Central New York Woodturners enjoyed a great demonstration on turning a Banksia Pod by **Mike Gridley** at their September 2016 meeting.

Ornamental and functional items can be made from a wide variety of objects found all over the world. One unusual item that people purchase to turn on their lathe was demonstrated by Mike as he showed how Banksia Pods can be made into salt and pepper shakers. The result? A textured design for a unique look on your table or to give away as a gift.

The Banksia pod or seed cones are from the Banksia tree that grows only in western Australia or on Papua New Guinea. It grows as a large shrub or small tree. Pods grow up to 12" in length and 4" in diameter; however, a salt and pepper shaker project does not need pods that large. The seed pockets generally extend from the solid center of the pod to the surface. The pods generally are dried prior to shipping and usually arrive ready for turning.

The pods can be purchased on line from such woodturning supply websites as Woodcraft (www.woodcraft.com), Bad Dog Burls (www.burlsource.com), and the Woodturners Catalog (www.woodturnerscatalog.com). Prices range from \$8 to \$14 or more depending on quality, diameter, and length.

Mike used salt and pepper shaker inserts made of plastic that were about 1¼" in diameter and 2.5" in length. The inserts are 13 dram vials available on Amazon for less than \$6 a dozen. The metal tops are 1 3/8" stainless steel snap-on units and can be purchased on line from the Woodturners Catalog (www.woodturnerscatalog.com) for \$1.35 each. Or, if you want you can buy the insert and screw-on tops as a kits, purchase from either Woodturners Catalog or Rockler (www.rockler.com) for about \$10 for a salt and pepper set.

Mike noted that he used a band saw to cut both ends off the pod so it could be mounted between centers on the lathe for safe turning. The pod has to be long enough to allow a 2.5" deep insert plus enough material for a shaped

base and for a tenon to hold the piece when drilling for the insert.

He used a bowl gouge to begin the turning and noted that the tools had to be very sharp to cleanly cut the alternately hard, soft, and fuzzy material of the pod. As he began to turn, he showed how dusty and dirty turning these pods can be and suggested good shop ventilation and personal dust protection was essential to safe turning for this project.

While Mike was turning away material, he explained how the exterior gives way to a fuzzy material and finally a hard interior core. The seed pockets can be left open or filled with epoxy or other colored or clear material depending on what the turner wants the final project to look like. The texture and open seed pockets are part of the overall unusual design for the project and you need to take that into consideration as you use your turning tools to create the shape you want for the outside of the salt and pepper shakers. When the desired design is achieved, add a tenon to the base end so it can be held in a chuck.

Remove the piece from between centers and mount the piece with the tenon in a lathe. Using a 1¼" Forstner bit drill a hole slightly longer than 2.5" deep into the pod. Since the plastic body tapers from slightly more than 1" at the top down to approximately 7/8" at the base, you need to repeatedly test the insert in the pod until you achieve the desired fit. The insert should fit firmly, but do not force it or it will split the pod.

Finally, sand the piece as desired – probably to only medium grit since the piece is meant to look textured and not carefully refined. Part the tenon off at the base. Using a small amount of epoxy, glue the tube in place with the threads showing so there is room to screw on the top. Finish can be applied to the finished pod, if desired, such as polyurethane.

Write up Submitted by **Chad Dawson**

Photos on next page by **Heather Muckley & John Meloling**

SEPTEMBER DEMONSTRATION PHOTOS



SEPTEMBER SATURDAY WORKSHOP

The September Saturday workshop was held at **Eight Acres**. Several in the group worked to turn banksia pods. We also had a couple new folks get some basic turning training and another get some specialized bowl turning instruction. Thanks to all who helped as mentors

at this event. It really helps to have additional hands available! Here are some photos of the morning.

NOTE: Experienced turners are always needed at workshops to help others.

The mentors do not pay for the workshop unless they take supplied materials.

