

Cindy Drozda "The Fine Art of Woodturning"

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Mushroom Box - Turning Steps

This design starts with a dry piece of tree branch, approximately 2-1/2" (65mm) in diameter and 4-1/4" (110mm) long. I like to use a 3" (75mm) diameter Banksia Pod.

You will also need a jam chuck blank bigger than the stem.

1. Prepare the blank by putting between centers and turning a tenon on both ends. If you're using a Banksia Pod, cut the ends off first.
2. Put the top of the box in the chuck and part off the stem portion, leaving the cap portion in the chuck.
3. Hollow out the inside of the lid (mushroom cap), and create a parallel recess for the stem.
4. Sand the inside of the lid
5. Chuck the bottom/stem and jam fit the cap recess onto the end of it. Tape the cap on before removing the tail stock.
6. Finish shaping and sanding the Mushroom Cap.
7. Hollow the stem, and shape the outside as much as you can.
8. Put the stem on a jam chuck to finish the bottom.
9. Apply finish off the lathe for best results on the natural edge.
10. Sign your work.

Some design considerations:

1. It is possible to do this project in different sizes, larger or smaller. I find the ideal size is about 2"/50mm – 3"/75mm.
2. Taller or shorter work, also. The taller/deeper the cap and stem are, the more challenging the hollowing is.
3. Branches in this size range often dry without cracking. It's good to seal the ends, though.
4. The class project uses a piece of branch wood, and a burl. Try creating your own "live edge" by carving, burning, wire brushing, on a plain blank.
5. Choose dry wood for the best lid fit over time.
6. Choose jam chucks with parallel even grain and consistent density.

Build your confidence:

1. Shallower curves are less challenging.
2. Shorter cap and stem will be easier to hollow because of less toolrest overhang.
3. Choose forgiving wood that isn't expensive so you don't worry about ruining it. Harvest your own branches, they're free!
4. Wood without knots will be nicer to cut
5. Bark dulls tools quicker, so removing it is a good idea.
6. Use the tailstock, and tape, whenever possible.
7. Fitting a tenon to a recess is easier than fitting a recess to a tenon.

Challenge yourself:

1. Use a burl for the cap.
2. Experiment with different shapes.
3. Make a Mushroom Box out of a Banksia Pod.
4. Decorate the Mushroom Cap with pyrography, color, carving, gilding, etc.
5. Spend the time to get smooth, pleasing forms, and demand a smooth surface on the insides.
6. Aim for a friction-fit lid.
7. Demand a high level of finishing without tool marks or torn grain.