

# Kurt's clinic

Kurt Hertzog gives some answers to readers' questions

## Bottle stoppers

**Question:** I make a lot of bottle stoppers to sell at the craft fairs. To set my stuff apart, I try to use more interesting woods and shapely designs. Those stoppers give me a hard time getting a good finish into all the nooks and crannies of tightly featured burl caps and bark inclusion pieces. Any suggested finishes that will fill the bill, look good, and be durable?

**Answer:** Bottle stoppers really don't get a ton of wear in their lifetime, so many folks use the various 'rub and buff' formulas, whether homebrew or commercial. These finishes are quite adequate for durability. As you've noted, burl cap, bark inclusions, or tightly featured turnings are difficult to process with any friction finish. For those, or better yet all of your stoppers, you can either use a spray or a dip product. I've used dipping processes with lacquers and shellacs but I find them to be far messier and prone to quality issues after drying when compared to sprays. No matter how much I try, I always have that hardened drip showing up after drying that I didn't wipe away properly. I think you'll do well with a spray lacquer – looks good and is durable. High-gloss finishes on any turnings are usually the big sellers in the craft arena. I have great results with the inexpensive rattle can lacquers from my local discount stores. Be careful when and where you spray. Adequate ventilation is very important and I even use the properly equipped filter mask unless I'm outdoors spraying – a very valuable tip for any spray can product. When it says to shake well for two minutes, or whatever is recommended, do it. The mixing of the product and the propellant well and



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**Doing a lacquer finish on pens. Outdoors with plenty of ventilation is my choice. Notice the pistol grip on the rattle can of lacquer**

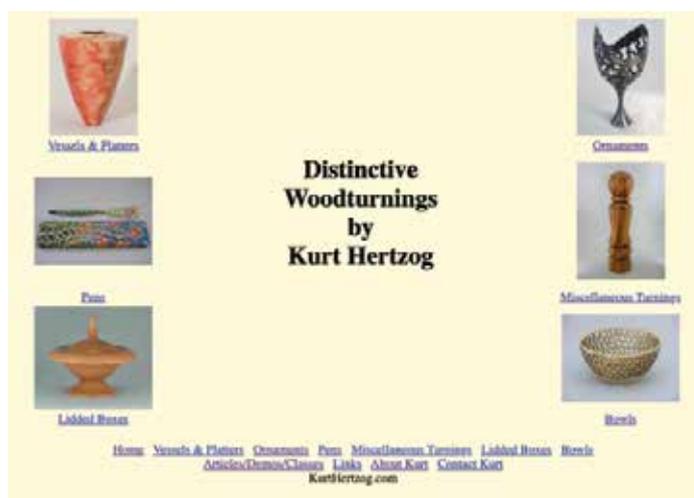
uniformly is one key to a quality spray and getting the functional usefulness of the entire can of spray. I also find that a clip-on handle with a trigger allowing for spraying like a gun makes for a better result. My handles are inexpensive, plastic devices that can be moved from can to

can as needed. Mine are sold by Rust-Oleum, found in the paint department at a cost of a few dollars. Rather than monkeying around moving them, I have several of them on the various spray product cans and only move them when the can is disposed of.

## Website selling

**Question:** I'm thinking about having a website created to help sell my turnings but I'm not sure it will be worth the cost and bother. I know you have a website. What did it cost? Has it been worth it to you? Did you do it yourself or hire someone to get it done? Any guidance on traveling this path is welcome.

**Answer:** My website direct costs are only the hosting, which runs in the neighbourhood of \$75 per year on a basic multi-year plan. Yes, it has been worth it but my plans and expectations are quite simple. They were only to publicise my teaching and demonstrating capabilities. My site shows a few examples of my work, my current woodturning calendar, my past teaching history and topics, and shares my already published articles. I do no selling and my site is purely informational. I created it and maintain it myself, but remember my needs and site are quite basic. One thing I do to try to keep it fresh is to randomly select the images displayed in each category on



**My site is relatively simple and easy to create and maintain. It is a web presence with pages of my work, calendar, and credentials as a demonstrator**

the home page from my galleries. That way every visit is a different look. Whether you would benefit by having a website is difficult for me to answer. It really depends on your specific needs and expectations of results. As you think it through, be certain to consider these questions: Do you turn 'commodity' items that you sell in volume, or artistic one-of-a-kind items at higher prices? Are they repeats of designs of yours or totally unique items each time? Is your end goal only to increase your volume of sales or is it to reach a wider market? Is your website intended to be informational to let your potential clients know where you will be selling, teaching, or demonstrating? Do you plan to sell directly from your website, i.e. have a shopping cart, accept payments, keep inventory, and generate shipping labels, etc.? Will your website simply link you with an interested buyer for further negotiation and payment, shipping details, and more? If you want to sell your wares or services in a larger and potentially world-wide market, you really do need that kind of reach via a web presence. Of course, if you have your

work in galleries, they should be using their marketing skills and web presence to help move your turnings. That's what you are giving them a commission for. Website generation can be easily done by the home user with the aid of user-friendly web-building software or long hand with some additional skills. Most hosting companies offer free software aids to assist you. These user-built sites can range from simple to complex, including shopping carts and financial transactions. You certainly can hire it done. Depending on the complexity and the vendor selected, your costs can range from fairly modest to quite expensive. Don't overlook the marketing potential of Facebook, LinkedIn, and other mostly free media outlets. Last I knew, Facebook reached close to a billion members. Yes, a B for billion. Various woodturning and artistic groups on those services are not only a place to be recognised but a place to offer your services and wares. That kind of reach is not possible with a personal website. I recommend you explore using a site of your own along with Facebook and the others.

## Colour fade

**Question:** I have a box elder burl turning that is quite colourful. My turning mates tell me it is doomed to fade away. Is there anything I can do about this?

There are two solutions that can be used independently or together. First of all, keep anything that you'd like to maintain out of the sunlight. Ultraviolet from sun is especially degrading and will alter the colour of the base material as well as any colour accents or features with time. The sun is particularly harsh, but even most man-made lighting gives off UV wavelength rays that, over sufficient time,

will harm your colourful turnings. Another method that can assist colours, by itself or along with minimising UV radiation, is to artificially enhance the colours of or in the wood. The late Binh Pho taught me how to use colouring to enhance wood features. He was especially adept at making box elder absolutely jump. By using both airbrush and pen, he could use red airbrush colours to add to or punch

up the original beauty. Because it was a dye, it also didn't fade with time as the natural red colours would. Be cautious when adding artificial colours as it is easy to overdo things and make them look phony. A little bit goes a long way. There are some UV-resistant finishes but they are mainly for weather protection and aren't usually used by the woodturning community.



A hollow form of very pretty box elder burl with plenty of natural colour. To keep it that way, it needs to be sheltered as best from UV light



The 'dull' side of that hollow form. Some added red dye would certainly assist with its appearance – that or only present the best-looking side

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