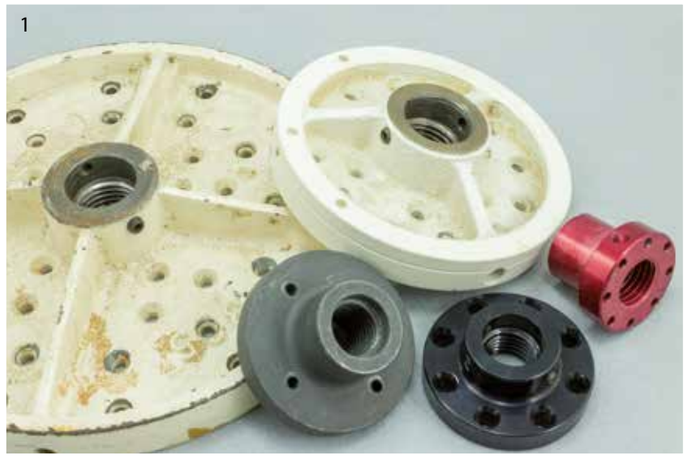
Kurt's clinic

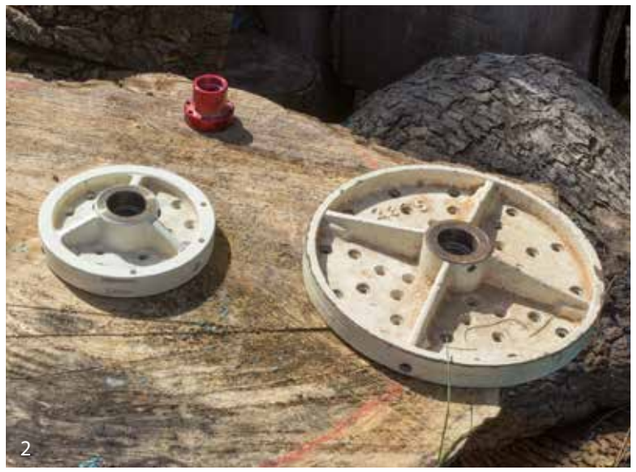
Kurt Hertzog answers readers' questions

Can you give me some advice on screw choices for mounting blanks to a faceplate? I'm trying to keep them short to minimise loss of my blank.

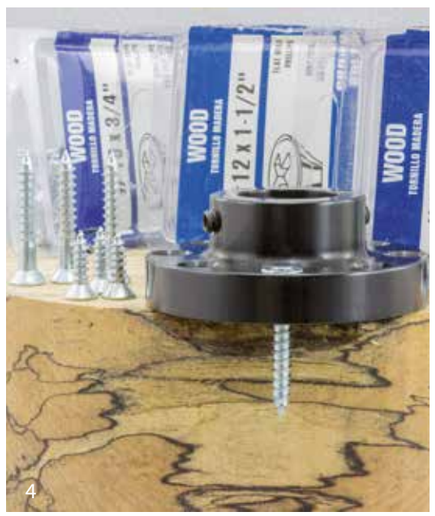
Faceplate mounting of work is a very advantageous method. First is the security of the mounting, especially larger and heavier blanks, provided it is properly done. In addition, the ability to remove the faceplate and reinstall it with the accuracy and repeatability of the mounting is a big plus. As you've noted, there can be a loss of wood available for your creation depending on the mounting technique. This can be the location and number of mounting holes used as well as the screws selected. I suggest that you select your screws carefully based on the need for strength. You can use shorter screws provided there are enough of them to secure the blank safely. I typically use a No.12 wood screw. The number and length vary on the size of the faceplate and the size/weight of the blank. Obviously, with a dry blank and sufficient screws, I can opt for reasonably short screws. Planning on the mounting and turning process will let you optimise the screw locations to place them in intentionally waste areas. Two key points are that the faceplate sites flat against the blank and the screws chosen are quality wood screws. DO NOT use drywall screws or other brittle fasteners – they will not provide a safe mounting regardless of the number or length.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY KURT HERTZOG



1 Depending on your selection of faceplate, you'll have an array of hole patterns and count. The more screws you can use, the less the need for length 2 Be certain to use the faceplate that will mount your blank safely. While the smaller white one could work, a better choice is the larger cast white faceplate 3 Your screw lengths and sizes will be determined by the size, weight and aspect ratio of your blank. Also, the better the mount, the less need for depth 4 Always use a quality wood screw of sufficient size. Avoid any hardened or brittle fasteners. Planning allows for minimal wood wastage.



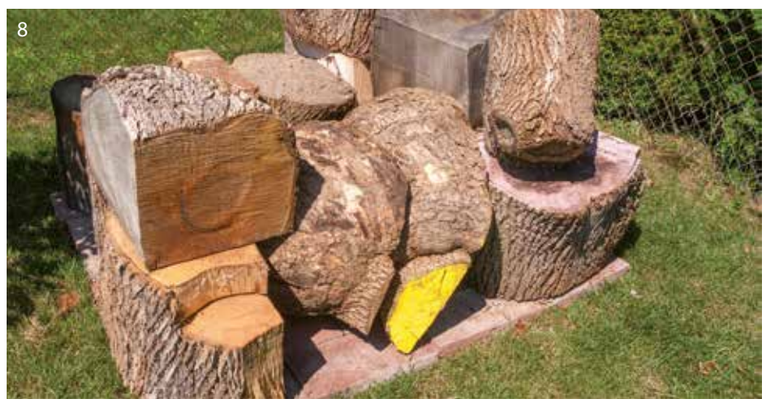
Is there an alternative to an airbrush ventilation box that does not need to vent out of a window?

I hesitate to offer ventilation alternatives since I'm not certain what you are spraying, how much, and where. Please be aware that proper ventilation is key to a safe environment for yourself and the others who might breathe any chemicals, whether paints, thinners, or cleaners. My method for spraying indoors in the shop is to only use water-based acrylics. I have a small spray booth that has a powered fan drawing the overspray into a filter element and charcoal filter. The booth is equipped with ductwork to vent to the outside. While I don't use that vent directly, I have a shop venting fan that will draw air from that area to the outside. Anytime I'm spraying a lot or using products that I'm concerned about, I do the spraying outside in the open air.

5 Not vented to the outside directly, my spray booth has a draw fan, filter element and charcoal filter. I do minimal spraying of water-based acrylics. 6 Applying a topcoat of rattle can lacquer is done outside. Any excessive painting or chemicals of concern are done out of doors.

I store my green wood in the shed. There tend to be critters in the wood when I bring it indoors to turn. Is there anything I can do to get rid of them?

I don't know whether your critters are in the bark or in the wood. If you are going to turn away the bark, why not strip it off outdoors along with any critters that may be resident. Depending on the age of the green wood and how it has been stored, the bark is sometimes easily removed by making a chainsaw cut just though its thickness and peeling it away like the shell of a hard-boiled egg. The cambium layer acts just like the membrane in an egg. Barring that or critters that are resident with the wood such as wormy types, you can kill them with heat. Depending on the size of the wood blank, a trip through the shop microwave will kill the bugs. It won't get rid of them but at least they won't be leaving your turning debris looking for a new home in the shop. I don't use chemicals. My usual solution to woods that are suspect is to let them age for a bit. Where I live, winters go a long way to killing off undesirables.



7 Uncovered for photos, the tarp-covered green wood's seen the wicked winter weather. Tends to thin most critters. Notice the bark already separating. 8 After a couple of seasons, my green wood supply is relatively free from bugs and ready to turn. If in doubt, I turn outside in the driveway.

I know you favour CA and lacquer finishes for woodturnings because of their looks and durability. Is there anything else that you use? Why?

My go-to finishes for anything requiring much handling are CA, lacquer, or epoxy. All three are easy to apply and create a very durable, good-looking finish. I do have another finish that I often use for 'shelf queens'. The turnings that will spend their days on a mantel, in a display case, or just plain hanging around to look pretty do well with a shellac finish. If you haven't worked with shellac, it is a joy to use provided you have fresh product. The best way to ensure you have fresh shellac is to mix your own rather than buy premixed in the stores. Flakes are available in a variety of shades and various levels of refinement. I opt for blonde, de-waxed flakes that I buy in small quantities to use up quickly. While mixed shellac has a finite shelf life, so do flakes. The beauty of mixing your own shellac is the ability of creating just the mix you wish from a spit coat to whatever pound cut you favour. Fresh flake mixed with denatured alcohol, Behkol, or Everclear per your desired ratios will yield a great finish that is easily applied and simple to clean up. Shellac will not hold up to a lot of handling or other heavy use, but for the looker-only woodturnings, it is my choice. For more information on shellac and other evaporative finishes, refer to my What You Need to Know series part 13. You'll find the column on evaporative finishes in *WT306*.

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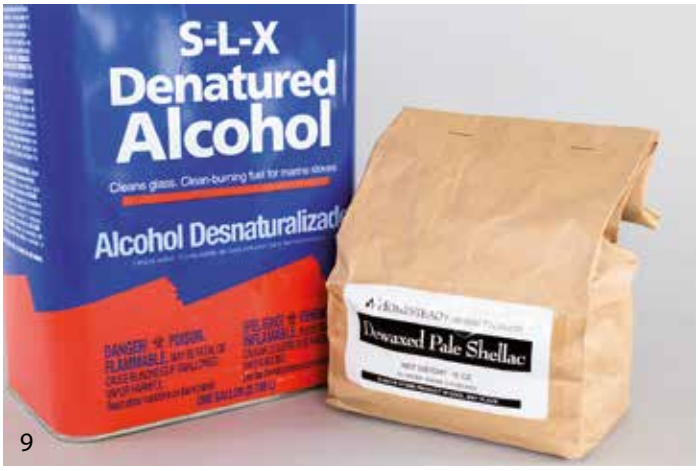
9 Rather than pre-made and likely older than desired, you can make your own shellac with your choice of flakes and an alcohol. Research the cut you want 10 Your woodturning supplier should have an assortment of different colours of shellac flakes. Be wary of the age since even flakes go bad with time 11 Some freshly mixed shellac being slobbered on a cherry ornament roof. It will wick in, dry, and look good. No real need for handling protection.



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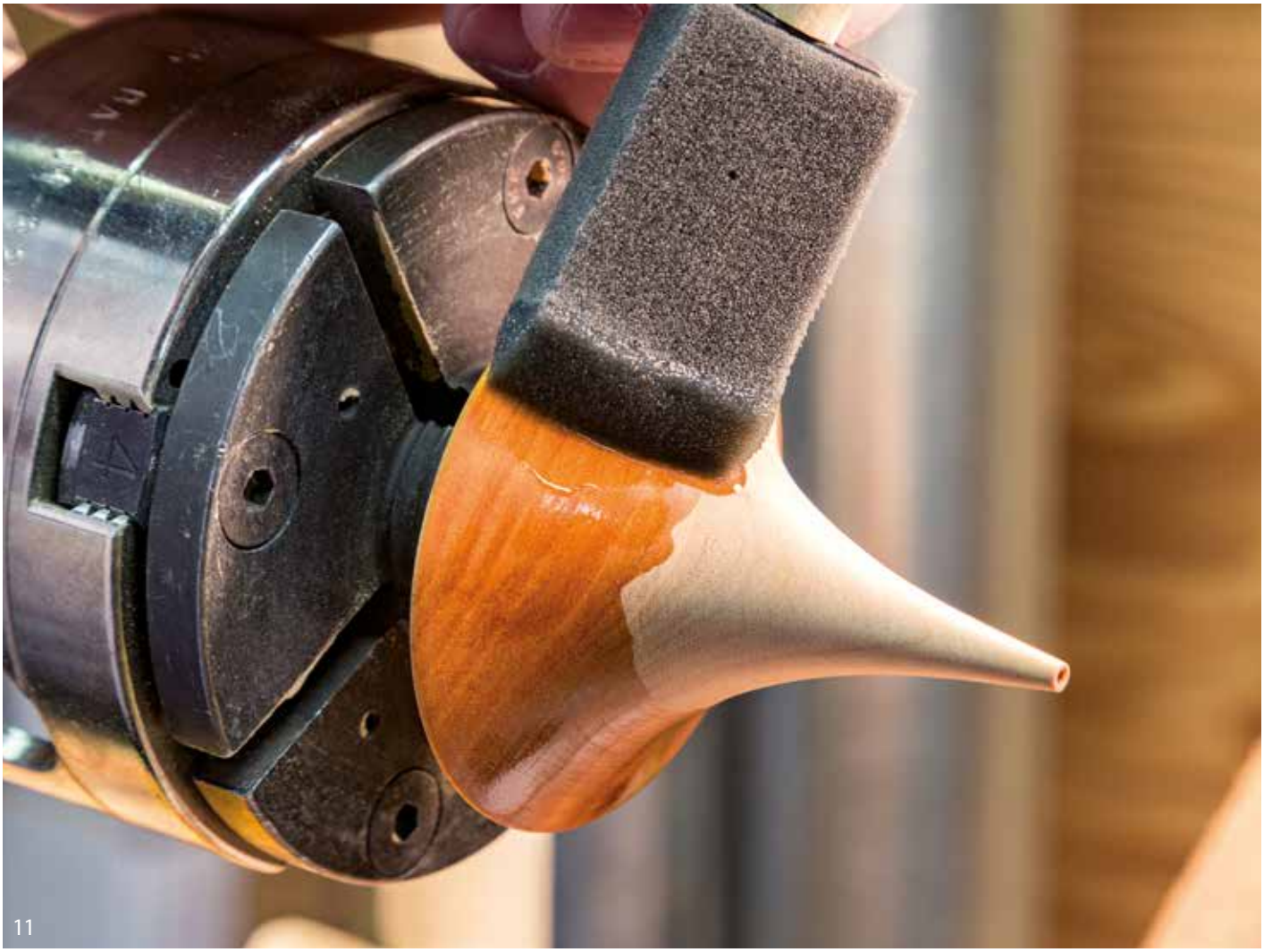
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