

Kurt's clinic

Kurt Hertzog answers readers' questions

I read many woodturning forums online, mainly the turning groups on social media and the AAW. How come I never see your posts?

In the past, I posted on various online forums. I've since drawn back from participating in those for several reasons. The best reason I can offer is the amount of time it takes. There are so many online sites, with more created every day, that it is more than a full-time job to stay current with only a select few, much less the many – especially if you get involved and have any ongoing interactions with other posters. I do follow some of the forums as time permits, as well as using the Google search functions to have relevant posts sent.

A bit more selfish answer is that there is too much drama in many of them. Often, there is a 'score' for posts an individual makes. It seems to indicate that the more you answer, the more correct you are. Perhaps, but not always true. The badges awarded to the answer-everything folk honour them for their participation. I'm glad some can devote their time and energy to helping others.

That said, on occasion, some of the answers offered are cringe-worthy. When those occur, I honestly believe that the answer offered is incorrect, perhaps not the most accurate, and sometimes unsafe. My potential offering is, in my opinion, more accurate, safer, or more appropriate for the individual asking. That said, there is nothing to be gained by contesting the offered answer and getting into flame wars. Especially since I don't have one of the 'I answer everything' badges and have no intention of striving for one. I sit back and let other posters correct the situation. I share with everyone who reads my nearly 300 published articles and those attending demos at symposia. Between those and this column, I figure I've got more than enough on my plate.

You talk about the mix of 'experts' and 'wannabees' on YouTube. What is the best way to sort them out?

For the most part, the posters who have a longer-term track record are usually worth reading or watching. Their willingness to share their expertise is laudable. Because they have a host of materials on a particular subject or topic, it is easy to ferret out those who are blowing smoke.

Unfortunately, some folks create content that isn't accurate, and they don't know it or is intentionally clickbait. My suggestion is to review several creators' work on any topic you are interested in. There are millions of items to choose from among the many online video sites. YouTube, the largest and currently the most popular, isn't the only one, so spread your viewing to the other sources. My best suggestion is to become familiar with the major names in the field.

Since we are talking about woodturning here, the major players have their websites, offer commercial videos and books, and are invited demonstrators to the major symposia. Content offered by these folks is almost always solid and the best you can get. Unknowns aren't to be automatically shunned but require a bit more care. A couple of offerings by someone you haven't ever heard of or someone who just showed up should raise much caution. Don't immediately ditch an up-and-comer but be cautious and see if they build their name. If I see someone who is clickbait or a hidden commercial for themselves or some other product, I skip them and move on to adding that creator to the permanent avoid list.

Always remember that the content of YouTube, and perhaps other online hosted materials, isn't vetted for accuracy or safety. The screening seems mainly politically oriented with no effort on accuracy.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY KURT HERTZOG

Can you turn plywood? Have you done it? How does it turn?

Yes, you can turn plywood. Yes, I have done it. It turns nicely depending on the plywood you use, the method of your blank creation, and your end goal. The first point to make is that saying plywood is like saying wood. There are many sizes, shapes and grades of plywood. Some plywood is essentially glue and the least-expensive filler stock available. Other plywood is great-looking stuff with nicely finished surfaces and enhanced strength based on its construction.

There is myriad other plywood in between. Get a chance to work with Baltic birch plywood, often used for scrolling, and you'll appreciate the varying formulations and quality available. Let me explain my experience turning plywood so we can have some perspective. The images from my files show 2009 dates, so it was quite a while ago.

I didn't simply glue up pieces of plywood to create a thicker piece of turning stock. That certainly will work, but I'm uncertain what is gained since you'd have the internal voids in the glue-up. Simply stack glued to create additional thickness, the alternating interior plywood grain directions would be interesting. My interest back then was an outgrowth of the 'bowl from a plank' method. I was experimenting with that concept as well as becoming interested in simple segmenting. Not the feature rings and exotic designs, but simply gluing up segments to create a bowl blank with only face grain. Some experimentation and success with walnut plank stock led to the experimentation with plywood.

Nothing other than run-of-the-mill construction-grade plywood that was kicking around the shop. Having sorted the method of accurately cutting segments on the chapsaw, I decided to take the walnut segmented experiment to plywood. Lots of fun and



1 My early experimentation with the bowl from a plank concept. This not-so-traditional adaptation of that process yielded this unique look
2 About 14 x 8 x 3/4 in, the ability to get a bit wild with species selection and grain orientation is limitless. It helped drive my plywood interest
3 My entire collection of segmented bowl work. The original walnut bowl was followed by a plywood bowl and a smaller walnut done for an article



4 The next experiment in bowl from a plank was my first effort at segmenting. Circa 2009, this bowl is also about 14 x 8 in but a thicker 1/2 in or so
5 While more work than I usually like, the segmenting blank creation has two huge advantages – no real limit on final blank size and all face grain



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decent results from a glue-up and turning point of view, although other than the learning, I'm uncertain of any real advantage. My only plywood bowl was a segmented concoction about 14in across and 8in deep.

Turned and sanded with all the traditional bowl-turning techniques and tools but seemed a bit dustier. You can easily give it a try in your shop. Whether simple stack-glued for blank size creation or segmented, you can easily and modestly priced have your own experience turning plywood. While not best included here, there have been questions on segmenting that I'll include in an upcoming column. It will be focused on the easy entry point for technique and equipment as well as simple design and good construction methodology.

6 Per the original question, yes plywood can be turned whether stack-glued or segmented. Here is my first (and only) segmented plywood bowl

7 You can see the variations in the internal plys, colours and glues, and grain orientations. Turned and sanded yielding this 14 x 8 x 1/4in plywood bowl

8 The plywood turned and sanded using all of the standard tools and techniques, although somewhat dusty. The final product after a quick wipe-on poly