

# Textured candleholder

John Jordan shows you how to create this beaded and textured candleholder from a piece of cherry

**G**reen wood is almost all I turn; I don't enjoy turning dry wood, and I don't keep much around. When the AAW invited me to be part of a 'Spindle' exhibit, I knew a candleholder would be a good item to make, and I had done a few similar pieces in years past. There are many designs you could choose but I like to build into my designs a strong design feel and also individualise it by adding elements that one would not necessarily think of, such as added texture. Such enhancements not only change the appearance, but also the feel of the item.

Touch is a very important part of the things we make. They are designed to be tactile as well as visual and perhaps even functional as well.

The main problem with making a fairly large candleholder from green wood is drying without cracking, or the fact that this item could take a long time to dry. Those issues are easily overcome by turning the candleholder hollow and allowing it to dry evenly over the course of a few days.

It is often difficult to obtain fairly large pieces of wood that are dry, and truly defect free. And if one has to pay for it, it is

likely to be costly, which is a consideration for some. That is one of the reasons I like green – free – wood, in addition to the availability and ease of working.

Fresh wood also often has brighter colours and heartwood/sapwood contrasts, although that doesn't matter here as the piece is being dyed black. The choice of timbers used can be varied a lot. I have used cherry (*Prunus spp.*), but you can use close-grained hardwoods which are ideal for carving and texturing, or open grained timbers which can add a whole new dimension for you to explore as far as texturing is concerned.

This article shows how I made this one, but of course you can make a pair of candleholders – matching if you like. If making a set consider using odd numbers like three, five or seven and vary their heights ranging in stepped increments from the smallest to the tallest. As you can see, there are so many options available to you, but like I have always said, keep it as simple as possible and have fun. I hope you like making this project.

## JOHN JORDAN



### About the author:

John Jordan is a woodturner from Nashville, Tennessee. Known primarily for his textured and carved hollow vessels, John has been

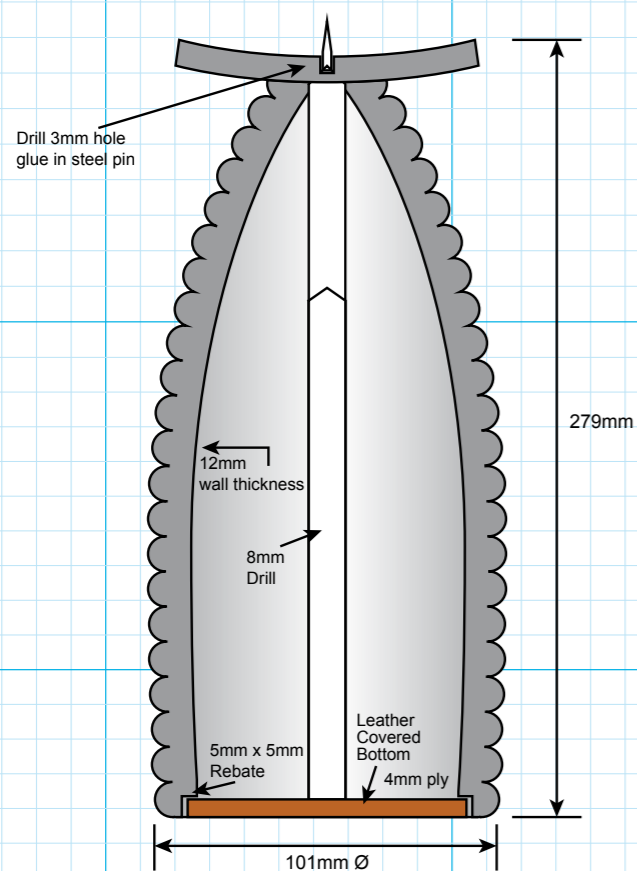
featured in nearly every major turning exhibition in the past 25 years. His work has received numerous awards, can be found in many corporate and private collections, and is in the permanent collections of over 25 museums.

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CANDLEHOLDER DIMENSIONS



INFORMATION

TIME TAKEN & COST

Time taken: 5-6 hours

Cost: Minimal – just the finishing supplies, etc. I used free wood

TOOLS

- 13mm side-ground bowl gouge
- 9mm detail gouge
- Shop made beading tool

ADDITIONAL TOOLS & MATERIALS:

- Steel wire brush
- Fiebings USMC Black leather dye
- Krylon Matte Finish, or other acrylic artists fixative
- Thin leather
- PVA or cyanoacrylate glue
- Nail or wire for point to secure candle

1 Start the project by mounting a spindle grain square of fresh cherry (*Prunus spp.*) without the pith or defects, chainsawed to about 115 x 280mm, between centres and rough to a cylinder with a 12mm side-ground bowl gouge. Almost any clear, defect free wood will work nicely for this

2 Turn a 50mm tenon clean and square on what will be the top of the candleholder, and mount the piece in a chuck

“Face the end off clean and flat and define the thickness with the detail gouge”

3 Next, begin to shape the body of the candleholder, leaving the part of the body near the top thicker for support while the inside is hollowed. This will prevent chatter and flexing of the piece, and the extra thickness will be turned away after the hollowing has been completed

4 You can now face the end off clean and flat and define the thickness of the piece with the detail gouge



5 Make a small dimple with the gouge in the centre as a starting point for the drill

6 Using a 10mm drill held with vice grips, drill the hole to the depth the piece will be hollowed

7 Hollow out the inside evenly with a straight hollowing tool to a thickness of 12mm, which will allow the piece to dry evenly and fairly quickly without cracking

8 Turn a small 5 x 5mm rebate to accept a thin bottom after the piece is dry

9 Now reverse the candleholder onto the chuck in expansion mode – it's important to not over-tighten the jaws and crack the piece. Use the tailstock to aid in centring and give added support

10 The remaining part of the body can now be turned, along with the underside of the dish on the top

11 Use a homemade beading tool to make a graduated series of beads from top to bottom of the body. This tool cuts one side of two beads at a time, and allows for quite a bit of size difference in beads. Raising a burr with a small ceramic slipstone sharpens the tool. It is used at a slight tilt down and pushing it in, and swinging it in a bit of an arc, depending on the size of the bead

12 Since the beads are going to be textured, they need not be flawless, but the shape of each bead needs to be good

Handy hints

1. To turn your own textured candle, hold an inexpensive candle in a chuck, shape with the detail gouge and turn the beads with the same tool used for the body of the candleholder. Hold a butane lighter or heat gun near the candle as it rotates to give it a nice finished look. Be careful as it can melt quicker than intended

2. Don't be afraid to experiment when it comes to projects like this

3. Make different sizes and shapes and group them together

4. Try different sorts of wood, but be sure it is clean and crack/defect free before you begin – there is no point in turning poor quality wood

5. The wire brush must be fresh and sharp, and you'll need to experiment a bit to find the best wood/wire brush combinations that work for you

**13** With the lathe running at a modest speed, around 3-400 rpm, lightly hold a wire brush – brass plated steel in this photo – against the rotating piece, one bead at a time, swinging the brush in an arc to cover the entire surface of each bead. The lathe is running in reverse here, and will be switched back to normal rotation for another light pass with the brush, which will knock off any fuzz. It's important to brush lightly at first to establish the scratches, after which the pressure can be increased as the wires will drop back into the same grooves, making them deeper



**14** You now clean up the underside of the dish section of the candleholder with the detail gouge, and turn the top of the dish to match the curve of the underside, leaving a finished thickness of about 5mm



**15** At this stage you can finish the turning, as everything else will be completed off the lathe



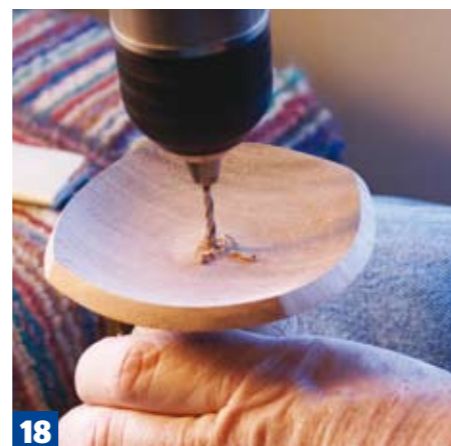
**16** The piece needs to dry for a few days. Laying it on its side, and putting it in a cabinet to moderate the airflow and slow the drying will ensure it doesn't crack



**17** Shaping the top dish adds interest to the candleholder. You need to divide the top into four, with each point connected with a shallow curve, which then needs to be shaped with a wood rasp and finished with sandpaper



**18** Drill a 1.5mm hole in the centre of the piece to accept a small steel point that helps secure the candle



**19** The body of the piece will be slightly out of round, so make a paper pattern...

**20** ... and transfer this to a thin piece of plywood. After cutting out and fitting the bottom...

**21** ... cover it with a thin piece of leather, which gives a nice look, and protects any surfaces the candleholder is placed on...

**22** ... the finished bottom should look something like this

**“Use black alcohol – spirits – leather dye as it only takes one application and it dries quickly”**

**23** Use black alcohol – spirits – leather dye as it only takes one application and it dries quickly. After the dye has dried, use an artist acrylic spray fixative as a finish

**24** Spray lacquer or shellac could be used as well, but oil-type finishes are more difficult because of the texture

**25** After the finish is dry, texture the dish section all over with a ‘hammered’ texture using a round point in a reciprocating power carver

**26** After texturing the top, apply a light coat of finish. Glue a small steel point into the hole for the candle to be pressed onto, and glue the bottom in with PVA, or CA glue. The textured candleholder is now complete ●

**Handy hints**

- 6.** Lightly wire brush the candleholder at first, increasing pressure as the grooves in the project begin to deepen. You can make the brushed texture subtle, or dramatic. The choice is yours
- 7.** Weight could be added before putting the bottom in, but I make the diameter at the bottom large enough to be stable without extra weight
- 8.** The blank could be turned with the pith down the centre. Drilling the pith out of the top to help prevent radial cracks as the piece dries, and then fitting a turned plug into the drilled hole. Alternatively, the dish could be turned from a second piece and fitted into the hole
- 9.** Acrylic paints, milk paints or metallic paints with chemical patinas would be fun to experiment with if you want to try something a bit different

**Handy hints**

- 10.** Other turned textures, small grooves, chatter work, and the Robert Sorby spiralling tools work well for surface decoration, as do textures done with various types of hand and powered carving tools
- 11.** The key to success with using colour on your work is to experiment on waste wood first
- 12.** Depending on the timber you choose, you can leave the wood natural. An alternative colouring or natural timber can be scorched with a blow torch. This effect can be very interesting, but make sure you follow proper safety precautions when using a naked flame; this is best done outside

