

# TURNING AND SCULPTING A FLOWERING VASE

by Cory White

## INSPIRATION

Nature provides woodturners with such beautiful wood. What if what we turn could reflect just some of nature's beauty? A flower's petals provide the perfect inspiration. Perhaps a quick look at the flowers known as trumpet vine and daylily is all a turner needs to begin the journey of turning and sculpting a flowering vase.



## PREPARATION

Simply put, select turning blanks that already have natural characteristics and features similar to flowers. This is not as challenging as it might seem once we learn what to focus on. Look down at the base of a tree and there it is, except it is upside down.



Besides stumps, sections of trees containing multiple crotches make great potential flowering vases.



## PRODUCTION STEPS

1. Ready the blank for turning by either using a heavy-duty faceplate or turn a long tenon if you have a chuck with deep jaws.



2. Rough turn the outside just enough to make it balanced, but not the top outside wall area.



**IF** you simply want to turn a basic “Flowering Vase” with a natural edge, and forgo extensive power carving and sanding, proceed with **Method 1**. If not, skip to Method 2.

**(SPECIAL NOTE:** Not all “flowering vase” blanks are conducive to this. Typically, only stump blanks will have enough width and natural flaring out characteristics to finish the piece using this method.)



### METHOD 1:

- A. First, finish turning the outside to accentuate an outward flaring form.
- B. Next, turn the inside to compliment the outside shape much like you would do with a bowl.
- C. Sand and apply finish of your choice.
- D. Lastly, part off the piece (or whatever method you prefer) and finish the bottom of the foot.





**IF** instead, you want to significantly sculpt the piece to further enhance the vessels' natural flower form and petal like features, proceed with **Method 2.** (This method can work well with stump blanks or multi-crotch section blanks)

**METHOD 2:** (stump blanks or multi-crotch section blanks)

- A. Rough out the beginning of the inside leaving plenty of thickness to allow for shaping organic features.
- B. If the blank allows, use a series of forstner bits to core out the inside center down to just above what is expected to be the bottom base. Be careful to limit the width of the coring as to not interfere with sculpting possibilities on the inside and outside.
- C. **Inside Sculpting:** Use power tools to grind, carve and create lines and depressions, rolls, etc. to enhance existing organic features. (Recommended tools are listed at the end.)
- D. **Outside Sculpting:** Use power tools to grind, carve and create lines and depressions, rolls, etc. to compliment the inside sculpting.
- E. Power sand inside and outside sculpted surfaces.
- F. Turn what will be the bottom of the "vase" to create visual lines that complement the upper piece.
- G. Establish and turn just the beginning of the foot and the parting off line.
- H. Do final sanding on bottom "vase" using the lathe.
- I. Do final power sanding to blend the lathe sanded base with the power sanded upper portion.
- J. Part and saw off the piece as planned. Power sand bottom of foot.
- K. Apply finish of choice.



## RECOMMENDED TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

1. Chainsaw with protective gear
2. Bandsaw
3. Angle grinder with carbide shaping disc
4. Die grinder with large shaping burrs
5. Flex-Shaft Rotary Tool with 1/4" collet for power sanding
6. Micro carver with 1/8" and 1/16" collets
7. 1/4" hook and loop sanding disc in 1", 2", and 3" sizes
8. 1/4" shank drum sanding assortment
9. 1/4", 1/8", 1/16" carving and shaping burrs assortment
10. Sculpting riffler rasps, riffler files, and diamond files
11. Large 6" heavy duty faceplate or Nova Titan III Chuck with 5" Power Grip Jaws (or equivalent)
12. Medium and large lathe chucks
13. Turning tools
14. Sand paper
15. Face shield
16. Respirator dust mask

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

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