

# Turning tips, tools & tricks

by James N. Duxbury

**1. Tool Holders.** Vertical tool racks and holders mounted to the wall work well if you only have one lathe or if space is limited. Many times it would be nice to have an organized tool case of some kind to use at demonstrations or workshops. In either case, when turning you may have to switch back and forth from tool to tool many times a minute so having tools in an organized, fixed location is not only a convenience but a real time saver. Detailed plans, material list, and step by step instructions on how to build my version of a portable tool case can be seen in Woodturning Design Magazine, Issue #21, Spring 2009, on Page 22, "Traveling Tool Tote."



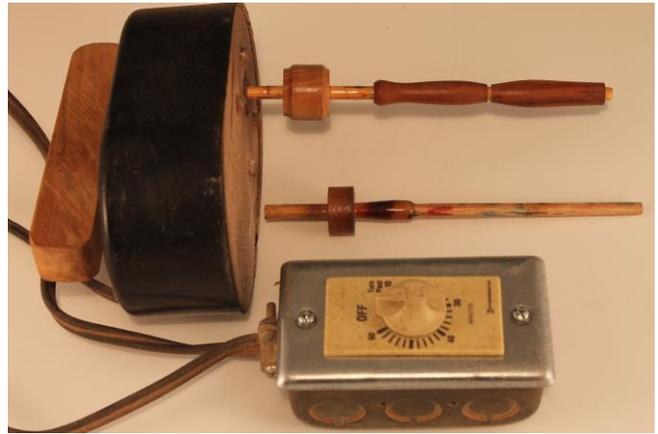
**2. Chuck Templates.** Lathe chucks have removable jaws to incorporate many different sized objects. They can compress over a tenon or expand into a recess. Often when turning an object, the size of the tenon or recess required has to be quickly known. Detailed plans, material list, and step-by-step instructions on how to build my version of Color-Coded Chuck Templates can be seen in Woodturning Design Magazine, Issue #24, Winter 2010, on Page 76.

**3. Morse Taper.** Turned wooden #2 Morse tapers can be made from a good piece of hardwood. The taper can be terminated with a turned point or cup to make a small soft (meaning a non-marking) drive center. However if terminated with a 1" long, 5/8" round tenon, a larger block of hardwood could be drilled and glued onto it, then turned for much larger operations. These tapers work well in the tailstock for holding or pressing as shown in #4 below. The simple turning jig shown will help to make the correct taper.



**4. Pen Press.** Once a pen blank is turned, the hardware has to be pressed into place. The purchased pen press is another gadget, costs about \$40.00 or more, takes up space, and is not easy to use. By turning two Morse tapers to fit your lathe, the lathe can become a very controllable press that adjusts easily and costs almost nothing. Total materials consist of a piece of hardwood 3/4" x 3/4" x 7" long. Details can be seen in Woodturning Design Magazine, Issue #15, Fall 2007, on Page 28. An improved version which adds a small piece of Corian to one piece is covered in the Fall 2008, issue #19.

**5. Rotisserie Motor.** A dowel pressed into the square drive of a standard rotisserie motor works well for finishing pens and other round objects. This motor has a wooden block screwed onto the cover which is clamped in a bench vise to hold and position the mandrel for easy spray lacquer finishing. A timer is also attached so that the motor will shut off in a few minutes.



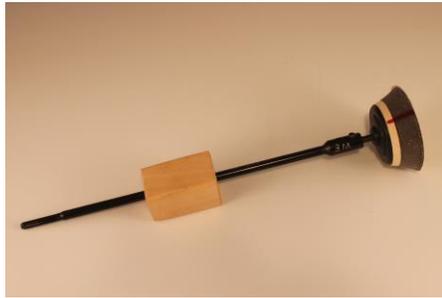
**6. Burning Wires.** Wire burned lines can often add a decorative touch. It is fast, easy, predictable, and economical. Materials to make a burning wire consist of a 1" x 1" x 6" piece of hardwood, two 1" drywall screws, and a 14" piece of guitar string. Guitar players often replace the strings and old strings work fine. Details can be seen in American Woodturner Magazine, August 2015, vol 30, no 4, on Page 28

**7. Tapping Tool.** With the ability to tap wood many different kinds of drive centers and tailstock ends can be custom made. The tap can also be made from a threaded steel rod. The tap shown is a 3/4" round x 6" long threaded rod with flutes ground into the cutting end. These are cheap to make and take very little time. Details can be seen in American Woodturner Magazine, December 2010, vol 25, no 6, on Page 18



**8. Spur Drive Seating .** Turners use a piece of hardwood and a large hammer or a large wooden mallet to seat a drive spur onto a block of wood. Actually just the head of the spur has to be seated and since it is larger than the #2 Morse Taper, This handle works well. Materials consist of a 3/4" diameter x 3" long steel pipe nipple, a 3/4"x 3/4"x 3/4" T, and a block of hardwood about 1 1/2" square x 7" long. Details can be seen in American Woodturner Magazine, October 2015, vol 30, no 5, on Page 31

**9. Flap Sander.** The sander can be made using a 4" length of 1/4" round steel rod. Make about a 1" long hacksaw cut down the center of one end. Then cut a piece of sandpaper about 2" x 4", fold it in half lengthwise, and slide the sandpaper into the saw cut. Place the rod in a drill motor, turn the lathe on at a low speed, and sand away. A smaller version, made from 1/8" round rod about 2" long works extremely well in a Dremel type Tool. It has worked great for sanding inside small openings and scroll work.



**10. Extension & Block with Sanding Pad.** A 12" drill extension, a 2" block with a hole drilled through it, and a sanding pad work really well to sand out the bottoms of a deep hollow form or other hard to reach areas. Hold the drill in one hand and guide the sanding pad by holding the wooden block in the other hand and sand away. Notice the red line on the 3" sanding pad. I burn about a 1/2" diameter segment of the Velcro, under the sand paper, so that it is easy to peel the paper off.

**11. Sander Mount.** I had a large sanding job of small pieces so I designed a holder that would support my random orbital sander. With the sander mounted securely, the piece being sanded can be held with both hands right in front of your face so you can see exactly what is happening. Adding to this sanding ease is the ability of the sander mount to be quickly and easily indexed to any of four positions putting the sanding surface upward, downward, left or right. It even makes changing the sand paper easier allowing you to hold the paper in both hands.



**12. Metal Detector.** Place a 1/2" rare earth magnet in about a 3" length of masking tape. Then just hold the end of the tape and drag the magnetic end over the surface and you will feel right away if there is a nail or screw in there.

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