

Turning a Weed Pot



Introduction & Thoughts on Design:

The weed pot is an excellent project for a beginning turner or a turner who is looking for a simple gift. One of the goals of the various projects in this series is to keep adding techniques and new procedures to the student's skill base, therefore I highly recommend, if at all possible, drilling the hole for the Weed Pot on the lathe or at the very least demonstrating how this is done. This is a good project for adding another tool and technique to the student's basket of tricks. Have the students try drilling the hole for the weed on the lathe using a Jacobs chuck in the tail stock with an appropriately sized drill bit. This added exercise also teaches students how to turn a foot on the wood blank so that it can be mounted in a four jaw chuck.

The design of a weed pot and the wood it is turned from are meant to be rustic, as its' purpose is to hold a dry flower or weed. The original weed pots were turned from old fence posts and sometimes only the top portion was turned and the bottom was left in the shape that it was found, usually split, cracked and well weathered. The more cracked and split the timber the more attractive the weed pot. However, be careful not to use wood that is excessively checked or cracked as it may disintegrate when turned at spindle turning speeds. A simple vase shape or wine bottle shape looks best. Little sanding is necessary as the more unfinished the piece the more appropriate it is for its' end use.

Materials:

Faceshield

4" x 4" x 8" plus or minus Green (still wet) Wood Blank with the bark still on it

5/8" Drill bit plus or minus for drilling hole for weed

Drill Chuck for lathe or Drill Press to drill hole for weed

1 1/4" Spindle Roughing Gouge

1/4" parting Tool

1/16" Chris Stott Style Parting Tool (optional)

3/8" Spindle Gouge



Weed Pot Blank Held in Chuck For Drilling

Procedure:

1. Locate a blank roughly 4" to 6" in diameter and about 6" to 10" long. Try a tree branch with its bark left on, an old fence post or a dead cedar tree.
2. Mark the centers on both ends and make a dimple with a nail or scratch awl.
3. Drill a 5/8" to 3/4" hole approximately 2" to 4" deep in the center of the end that is to be the top. It just needs to be deep enough to hold a dried flower or weed. You can use a drill press or a hand drill for this procedure. You can also drill the hole on the lathe by mounting the blank in a chuck or on a faceplate. Then with a drill chuck in the tailstock with a 5/8" or 3/4" drill bit proceed to drill into the blank with the lathe set to a slow speed , 300 rpm's plus or minus.
4. Mount the blank in the lathe using a 3/4" Steb center, 4 prong drive center, or a dead center in the head stock and a cone center in the tail stock.
5. Turn the top of the pot to a cylinder and shape the base of the vase, remembering to leave an unturned portion in the middle so that a band of bark will remain on the finished vase. Turning a bead at the top of the vase adds a bit of refinement and definition to the top. The very bottom should be undercut toward the center of the bottom, so that the Weed Pot will sit flat on the outside of the bottom. The bottom curve should appear to end at the center of the base or foot of the pot. The underside of the finished piece should be slightly concave in order for the pot to sit flat.
6. Sand the finished piece or not, remembering that it is a rustic piece and may not look good if sanded to a high polish.
7. Part the pot off and apply your favorite finish. An oil finish such as Watco Danish oil looks good.
8. Harvest a weed, stick it in the top and now admire your work.



*The Weed Pot mounted between Centers
When Hole has been predrilled
On the Drill Press*