

Kurt's clinic

Kurt Hertzog answers readers' questions

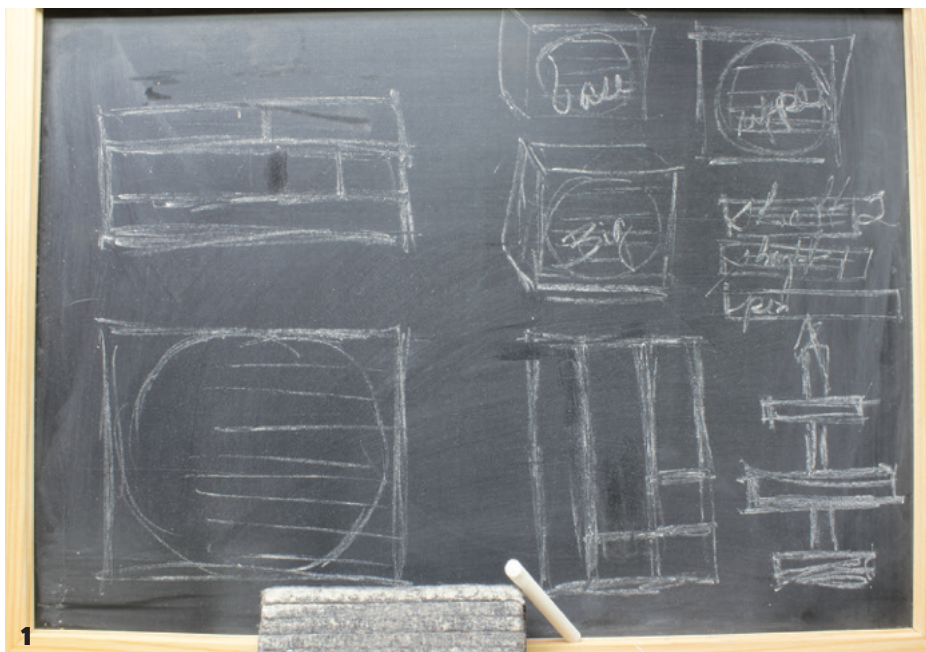
My club has a challenge project for the membership. We are all going to get a block of wood of the same species and size. Everyone's results will be shown and voted on for some prize at the challenge completion. We have until the meeting month after next. How do I even start?

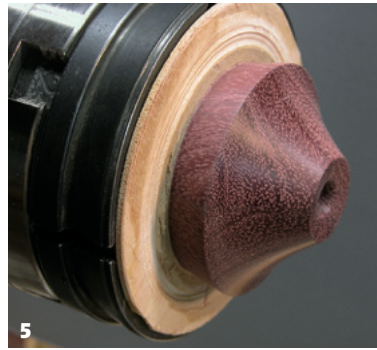
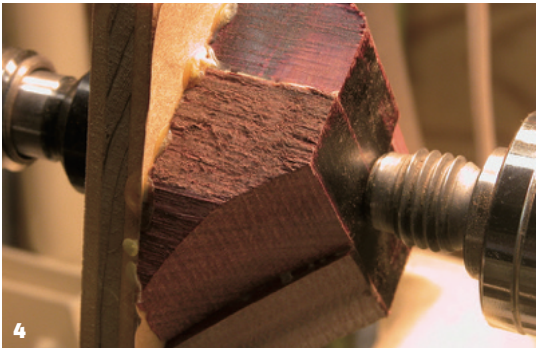
These projects are fun and can be quite creative. Usually, there is a quantity of identical blocks, so everyone starts at the same ground zero. Rules are often intentionally simple to allow for maximum flexibility. Sometimes you can make one item or, depending on the initial guidelines, more than one, such as a family of items. Some folks will go down the path of bowls, platters and lidded boxes, but others will stretch a bit. I suggest that you have two important considerations before you go too far. The major factors in your planning will be the species properties and the combination of block size/aspect ratio/grain orientation.

Obviously, the species will dictate the turning characteristics with some lending themselves to spindle work, faceplate work, miniatures, etc. Just as an example, starting with a block of wenge that is 6 x 6 x 2in will produce a very different result than a block of cherry that starts as 4 x 4 x 12in. The grain direction with respect to the block dimensions should also be factored into your plans. It will determine what mounting and cutting directions will be advantageous for your block. When you get your turn to pick out your block from the pile, don't just randomly grab one. Take sufficient time to look over the selection for flaws, grain orientation, and any figure/features that can enhance whatever you create. Sort through the available blocks as best you can to get the most useful.

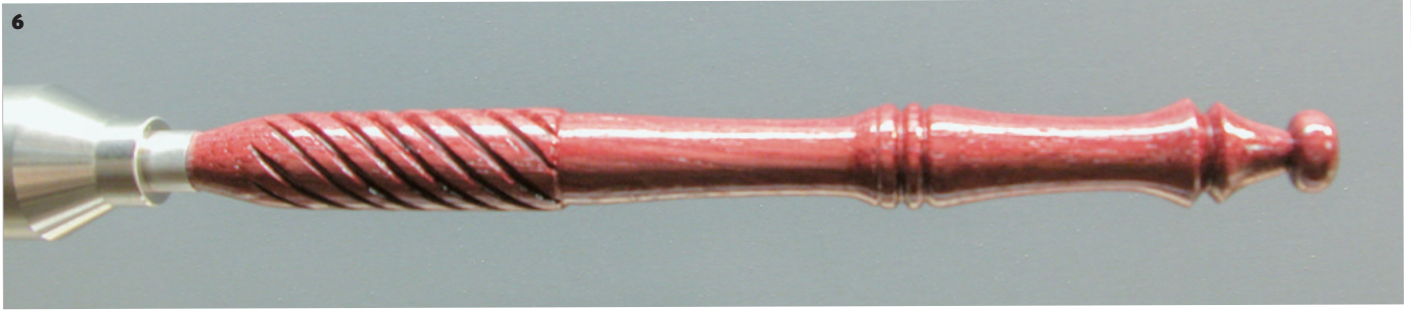
My suggestion is that you refrain from any cutting or turning until you've mapped out your entire project on paper, blackboard, or something like SketchUp. Decide on what you think would be different from your other turning mates and do some sketching. Don't

1 My plans for a 6 x 6 x 2in block of purpleheart. The plan is to make a tiered candy dish. The blackboard drawing shows my cutting plan to maximise the material usage **2** An in-process shot. The dish parts, minus the finial, are completed. The rest of the scraps are being glued up to make more stock for turning **3** The finial for the candy dish topper turned and finished with shellac, as are the other parts. Shellac will hold up well because of the minimal handling of the dish expected



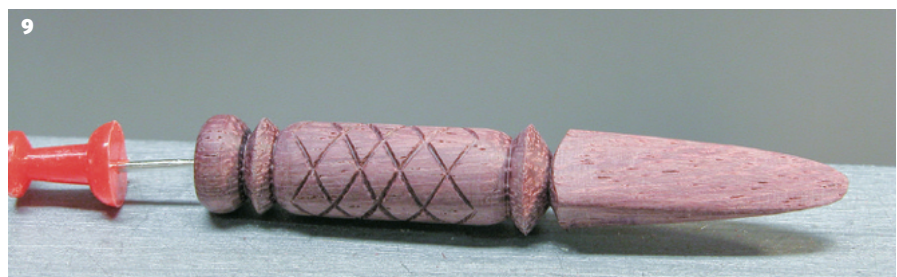


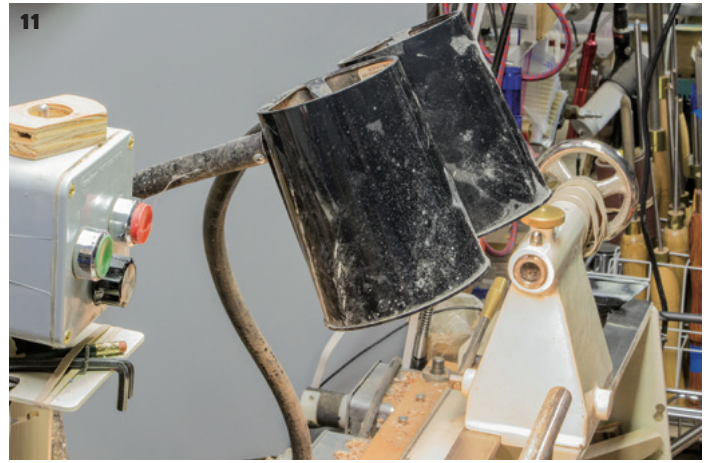
fall in love with your first idea. Stretch your mind a bit. Don't get stuck in the idea of one piece turned from the block. Give some thought to the family idea of turnings, or better yet, an assembly using multiple block parts after cutting, turning and assembly. You can measure out your block and figure how best to use the material available. I have a blackboard in my shop that I use for planning out these kinds of things or just making notes. Once planned, then simply execute. As an



example, to get you thinking a bit, I offer a collection of pictures of a challenge project I did with one of my clubs back in '06. Not offered as anything but a thought starter on planning and the potential for multi-piece assemblies. You'll find the planning aspects can be as much fun as the turning and creating aspects. Regardless of how you head down the path, do have fun. That is the goal of these efforts. Don't be afraid to fail should you reach too far. Your explanation of the problems encountered should you 'fail' at your design are as much a learning environment for you and your club mates.

4 Not pretty, but this glue-up from corner scraps will ultimately turn into a base for a pen that is planned with the remaining materials **5** Perhaps not the most creative pen base, but it will serve. The glue interfaces have virtually disappeared **6** The initial design planned for the cut list to include a full-length pen blank. A single-piece pen will be created using a few pen kit parts to complete my challenge **7** Per the plan, a multi-tier candy dish and a pen with stand were created from my block of purpleheart. The original block yielded the necessary parts with careful planning **8** More as a personal challenge to use every bit of wood left in the offcuts bag, I pick a piece that will let me create one more item **9** The push pin was used to help hold this as I sanded the blade into shape. Not the most well-sized letter opener, but the thought was there





Is there certain lighting you recommend for over the lathe? Any special brand or sizes? Is there such a thing as too much light?

There are several types of lighting that are useful for illuminating your lathe and work in process. While not always available based on your location and shop layout, natural lighting is always welcome. Windows, open doors, skylights, and any other way to get daylight into the shop and particularly to the lathe is ideal. In addition to any natural light and your general shop lighting, you can add area-specific lighting over and mounted on your lathe. Personally, on each of my full-sized lathes, I use a pair of two-lamp, 4ft fluorescent fixtures, side by side, directly overhead of the lathe and aligned parallel with the bed of the lathe. I recently changed all the lighting in my shop from fluorescent fixtures to LED. With no need for bulb protectors and instant on and off despite cold temperatures, LED lamps are very attractive. I'm sure there are energy savings as well, although that's not as important to me as the proper colour temp and sufficient lighting coverage.

With the shop and general lathe lighting in place, the last consideration is task lighting. This is the lighting you need to bring to bear on any specific task or turning. Gooseneck lamp lighting, whether lathe-mounted or not, that can be adjusted as needed to illuminate your task works well. I use several types of this lighting and when I need more than what is mounted to the lathe, I add clamp-on or magnetic attachment fixtures. In all my add-on lighting, I use daylight temperature LED or florescent bulbs. It will provide the best accuracy of colour rendition and works well for my photography needs, although I almost always need to add strobes. As for brands or sizes, I don't have any favourites. I use the run-of-the-mill economy brands from the hardware store or my local woodturning dealer. Can you have too much light? I don't think I've had that problem. I don't always turn on and use everything at once, but I don't have anything at any of my lathe locations that isn't used as needed.



10 My main shop has very little natural light. Each workstation has equipment-specific lighting installed. This lathe has two 4ft, double lamp LED lights directly over the bed **11** For task lighting, I have two gooseneck lamps installed to the lathe. Not only moveable because of the gooseneck, but also relocatable on the lathe **12** A look at the set-up of my lathe in my main shop. With the overhead lighting and the lathe-mounted gooseneck lamps, I usually have plenty of light for most turning **13** When the situation requires more light, often up very close, I can bring one or more of these additional lamps to bear. There are also clamp-on lamps if needed **14** Natural lighting is wonderful if you have windows or doors near your lathe. With open doors, you sometimes get unexpected visitors. Here, Cholo looks around

My turning friends are getting a group together to make a large wood buy. The quantity discount and single pallet shipping makes it attractive. Have you done this? What should we be concerned with?

Yes, I have placed a large quantity order. Years back, I became infatuated with manzanita burl mainly for hollow forms. I located a company in California that had reasonable pricing provided you bought a skid load. I don't remember the weight of the order based on loading a skid, but the wood and the over-the-road shipping cost made the per piece pricing bearable. I checked out the company and even Google mapped its street location. All seemed legit. My order went in, and I waited. The company had indicated that it was continually processing so my order might have a slight delay. After waiting for quite some time, I contacted it and was told it had shipped. It couldn't provide a waybill number or any shipping particulars. According to the company, nobody was in the office each time I reached them. Regardless, after this runaround and a different story with every subsequent call, I gave up. Problem was that I waited too long for PayPal to intervene. I was over the time limit. No luck with the bank whose card I used through PayPal or PP itself. I finally managed to get through to a helpful soul at PP who took sufficient pity on me to reverse my order and payment. It had been more fraud than just delayed shipment.

Once PP had reversed the charges, I magically started getting daily calls and emails from the vendor that my skid of burl was now ready to go. Just reinstate the payment and they could ship. Yeah, right. Ended well with the return of my money but was quite ugly in the process. Moral... do business with folks that you or someone you know has done business with. Be certain they were satisfied. Was everything as advertised? Prompt shipping and delivery? Regardless of websites and advertising, be very suspicious of anything that seems too good to be true. Use a bank card to which you can scream 'fraud' should you get a dud outfit, no shipping, the wrong product, changing prices, or other bits of flimflam. Keep tabs on any deadlines on fraud transaction reporting. If you pick a legit outfit and get your order in, be concerned with when, where, and how your skid of wood will be delivered. Tailgate service often costs extra. Unless you have a loading dock, fork truck, or other means of manipulating heavy loads, be certain you can deal with your delivery.

I'm looking at the various mini tools offered by the different companies. I'd like to get some suggestions as to what are the most important features I should be shopping for. Your input?

Selecting and buying tools, mini or others, always follows the same pattern in my mind. First and foremost is 'what issue are you planning on solving?' and 'is the tool or tools going to solve it?'. It is easy to envision the tool will solve your problem, but sort through what you are going fix before you go to find a solution. Since you ask about mini tools, I trust you are going to do smaller work and need to get into tighter spaces. Don't buy smaller tools for the sake of smaller unless the cutting-edge size and geometry solves your problem for you. In general, most full-sized tools will do much of what you want when properly shaped and ground. I do own some mini tools but use them for work that is so small that standard tools are unworkable. I do have special gravers and the like for my watchmaker's lathe, but they really aren't woodturning tools, though in certain instances they can be used as such. Other than those few tools needed for that work, I use my regular tools for everything else, whether small or large.

The keys to minis or other tools are a quality manufacturer, good tool steel, and appropriate size and shape. Pay attention to the length overall. Short shafts and short handles are great for dexterity but don't lend themselves to any reach over the rest. You may not need that, but just be aware. Rules of thumb for toolrest overhang taught by Stu Batty is 1:5 for cutting and 1:7 for scraping. That is one part extending over the rest with five parts behind the rest as a maximum. This speaks to overhang to behind the rest ratios for tool control. Locate the *Turning 25 with Stuart Batty* handout done for the SWAT Symposium in past years for more explanation on this. It is available for free on the internet. Also consider the tool shaft diameter. Pay attention to the section in Stu's handout regarding shaft diameter and toolrest overhang.

Don't get wrapped up in sets of tools. Rarely is there a package of tools that are all useful. Pick and choose the individual tools you need rather than the collection they want to market to you. Mini-tools, like full-sized tools, made by a quality vendor with quality materials are a long-term investment. I suggest you think of them as such and shop for value instead of price. You'll find that, depending on how mini your mini-tool needs are, you'll either already own something adaptable or will be able to find what you need in the marketplace.



15 An assortment of my smaller tools. Some are offered as 'minis' and some are just smaller than the other tools on offer **16** A mini as compared to a smaller, traditional-sized tool. Provided you use the larger tool with the proper overhang, it will cut the same or smaller details **17** My go-to tools for smaller needs. Be cautious about size since the control might be lacking should the overall length be insufficient for your needs **18** Never be afraid to grind your tool to fit your need. With the proper grind, the traditional tool will often provide the same cut without additional purchases **19** The differences in shaft diameter and tool length will make a big difference in the tool usage based on dampening, toolrest overhang, and control **20** Not an example of proper overhang but a reminder that, regardless of tool size, be cognisant of tool overhang. Read and heed the shaft and tool length recommendations

