

“Bird House “ Tree Ornament

by

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Fig. 1

For some time I have been producing many of these small Christmas tree ornaments as shown in Fig. 1 and in this article I have documented MY methods on how to produce them efficiently and at a very low cost.

There are of course many other ways to produce these and I would welcome any suggestions to that regard.

Many pieces of scrap woods can be used up, but by making these in batches , it is best to keep the basic dimensions of the raw material identical for all pieces. Fig 2 shows the two pieces of wood needed: for the body itself a blank 2" x 2" x 4" long and for the roof a blank of 2 ½" x 2 ½ " x 3" long.



Fig. 2

The wood for the body should be square and true because it is best to pre-drill the “nesting” hole of 1” dia x 1 ¼” deep , the entry hole of ½” dia and about ¾ below the top surface and the 1/8 dia hole for the perch at 1 3/8” below the top. They are drilled in batches on the drill press after marking the centers, using a saw tooth *Forstner* bit for the nesting hole (drilling into the end) and a standard flat *Forstner* bit for the entry hole on the side, (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3

In this case I have been using some very dry pieces of aromatic eastern cedar, which had many voids and cracks. Fig 4 shows an easy way to fill gaps and voids by using thin CA glue and fine black embossing powder, which is available in many colors from most *Scrap Booking* stores. Fill the cavity partially with the powder and dribble some CA glue onto it and in seconds the stuff will be hard and ready for turning. Do this in small steps to avoid cavities and repeat this procedure for deep holes.

Caution: Avoid breathing in the resulting Smoke, it is poisonous !



Fig. 4

The wood was mounted into a *Oneway Talon* chuck with the # 2 jaws for turning and it is best to provide some tail stock support using a revolving center, in this case using the *Oneway* live center with the small aluminum cone. This also ensures that the wood is centered and straight in the chuck for turning (Fig. 5)



Fig. 5

Fig. 6 and 7 show the roughing of the body to a round, using a *Crown* 5/8" dia heavy roughing gouge, but the same task could also be accomplished with a skew or a standard roughing gouge. The filler applied previously is now clearly visible and looks like a bark inclusion.



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

In the next step, (Fig.8), a spigot of 1 ¼" dia x 1/8" long is cut at the shoulder, using a small 1/8 x ½" wide parting tool. This will be used later for centering the roof in the assembly of the ornament.

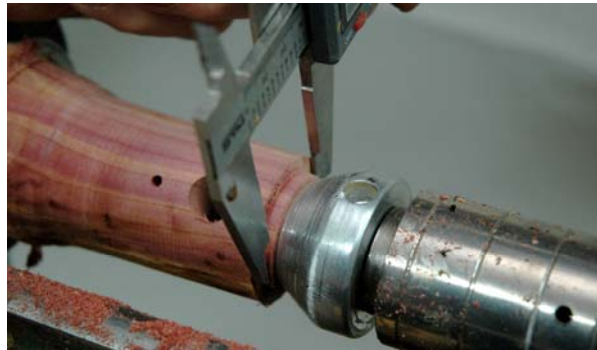


Fig. 8

A 1" wide *Sorby* oval skew makes fast work of smoothing the upper and lower part of the body, (Fig. 9). At this stage it must be decided what shape the body will be, cylindrical or egg shaped, with or without a finial.

If an egg shaped is preferred it is sometimes advantageous to enlarge the inside also to an egg shape prior to the completion of the outside to make the ornament as light as possible.

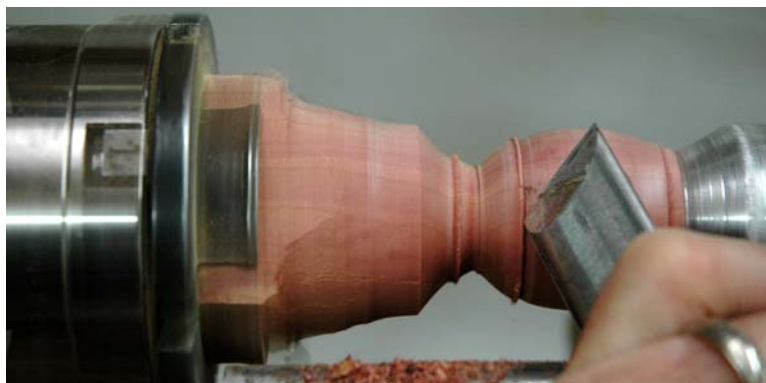


Fig. 9

In this case I wanted to provide a small finial at the bottom of the egg shaped house and used a 3/8" regular bowl gouge to turn a bit of a shape to about 3/8" diameter, (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10

The skew is used to part off the finished turned body, as shown in Fig. 11 and Fig. 12.

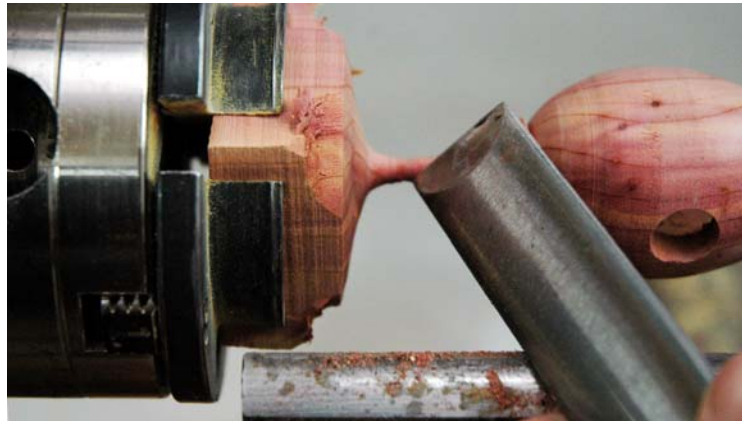


Fig 11



Fig. 12

Using the # 1 jaws from the *Oneway Talon* chuck the item is now reversed and very lightly held, Fig. 23, so the finial can be completed with very light cuts using the small bowl gouge, (Fig. 14).

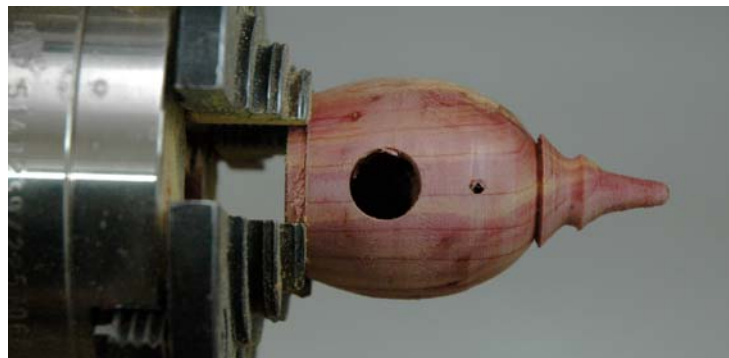


Fig. 13



Fig. 14

Light touch up sanding, applying *Mylands* friction polish and rubbing it out to a high gloss with paper toweling are the next steps, (Fig. 15, 16, 17). To retain the fresh scent of the cedar wood used here for some time, you might not want to apply any finish at all.



Fig. 15



Fig 16



Fig. 17

Fig. 18 shows the completed bottom half of the ornament and Fig. 19 shows this item with the 1/8" dia x 3/4" long perch dowel glued into place.



Fig. 18



Fig. 19

Turning the roof is the next step. A 1 1/4" saw tooth *Forstner* bit has been used to drill a hole about 3/16" depth into the end grain of the material for the roof. Depending of the type of screw chuck you are using, a hole has to pre - drilled to suit the chuck screw. I have a home made very old screw chuck with an adjustable screw (Fig 20), but a *Oneway Woodworm* screw held in the *Talon* chuck can also be utilized, (Fig. 21)



Fig. 20

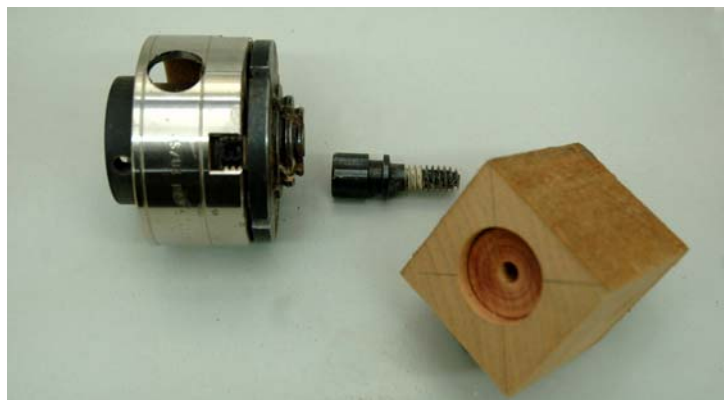


Fig. 21

The wood is now ready to be shaped into a “roof”. But before you proceed, drill a small hole for the screw eye to be used for the hanger into the end of the wood, using a small hand held pin vice, Fig 22.

Use the tailstock with a revolving center as an extra support while shaping the roof using a skew, spindle gouge or a small bowl gouge. Fig 23 and Fig 24 shows the turned and sanded roof. This is also the time to add some coloring to the roof either by using *Prisma Color* markers or dyes After adding some friction polish and the small screw eye this part of the ornament is completed, (Fig 25).

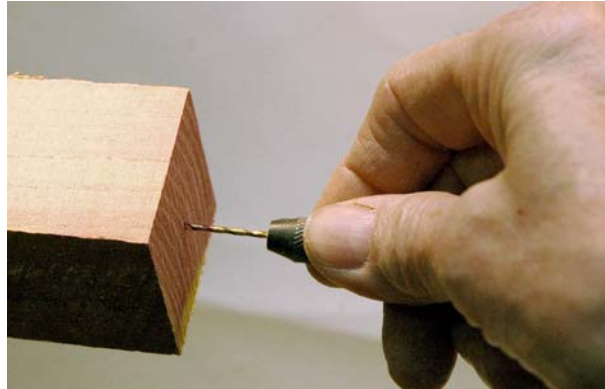


Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig 24



Fig. 25

The “fun” part of making these bird house ornaments can begin now. All roofs have been completed as shown in Fig. 26 and the roof and bottom part can be assembled, using a drop of CA glue to join these two items together .

Now you have to hunt for suitable sized and realistic looking birds, some craft stores stock them and locally we have a “Michaels” department store who stock the lowest priced ones and a large variety, “Chinese” birds, not very North American looking, other than the odd Bluejay or red Cardinal.

I find the local higher end hobby shops have the best selection, but at a higher price. Happy hunting !



Fig. 26

To fasten the little bird to the perch: first dip the end of the dowel (perch) into a small container (such as a bottle cap) of CA accelerator, put a drop of thick CA glue onto the underside of the bird and by bringing the wet dowel and the glue together, you get an instant bond. Watch your fingers !

Caution: Have the “Debonder” fluid handy at all times when working with CA Glue

A selection of some of these very delicate “Bird House” type Christmas tree ornaments are shown in Fig. 27 and 28.



Fig. 27



Fig 28

I hope you enjoy making these little treasures and you can change the sizes to suit the material (and birds) you have on hand. If you are offering these ornaments for sale you might also want to make a suitable display stand as shown in Fig. 28, which can be assembled in one or two tiers and has rotating acrylic discs.

Any comments and / or suggestions as to improve MY methods are welcome. Thank you.

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