

Southern Turners Project Sheet

Natural edge winged bowl



The project takes a piece of timber, usually a branch, where the length is greater than the width and creates a bowl. The unusual form generates interest in how the result is achieved. More of the log can be used than when turning a traditional circular bowl.



The outer areas of the bowl are like wings particularly during the turning and can be dangerous so a word of caution: **Do not extend the hands beyond the tool rest at any time the lathe is on.**

Step 1 is to mount the bowl between centres using spur drives to hold the work firmly.

Step 2 is to create a tenon. This should be deep enough that the chuck does not need to hold the bark, which is not reliable. This holding method allows the timber to be adjusted during cutting to ensure that the bark is of even thickness.



An alternative approach is to remove some bark with a Forstner bit or angle driver, sufficient to attach a faceplate. Turn the tenon on the opposite side. To ensure there is an even thickness and width of bark around the edge line up the faceplate so it is parallel with an imaginary line across the timber.

Step 3. A decision needs to be made on the design of the bowl. If the bark is to be retained the edges on the long sides need to finish at the top where there is bark. Short winged bowls means less air cutting.

Stock where the bark is firmly attached enables a natural edge bowl (also called a live edge bowl) to be turned with the bark retained. CA glue can be used to help hold the bark during the process.

Once the design is decided mount the piece in a chuck so the bottom can be refined. Close to the centre of the piece it is standard turning. Take extra care further away from the centre as is a combination of cutting wood and air. The further along you get in the project the less you see what you are turning!

Turning air requires a very focused approach with the bowl gouge. The bevel edge cannot be depended upon to support the cut. Instead, rely on moving the body and hand-eye control. The bevel will still be lined up with and parallel to the cut surface, but the gaps in space, the air, will not allow riding the bevel. Instead, visualize the exact line to be cut and make the tool follow that path using hand-eye coordination. The tool rest is the key to making clean cutting air cuts. Use the tool rest as a visual guide and anchor for the air cuts. Watch the tool tip location and just slide it along the desired path in relation to the tool rest. Use firm downward pressure with the left hand to keep the bowl gouge on the tool rest.

Sand but take care working on the wings, which are best done with lathe stopped.

Tip 1: To help see the wings place a sheet of white paper on the lathe bed.

Tip 2: A faster lathe speed means faster cutting of the timber, less cutting air.

Step 4. Reverse the bowl so that it can be held by the chuck. Work on the rim first as the timber left in the centre will stabilise the work and reduce the vibration. Use the process described above in Step 2 for cutting the rim. Move down the rim, creating a channel between the rim and the centre mass. Remove that centre timber and then work again on the rim. Try not to go back to work on the rim.

Step 5. To remove the tenon take a waste block, create a tenon to hold it and mount in the chuck. Shape the outer edge to conform to the shape of the bowl. Place a neoprene mat, a cloth or a paper towel between the waste block and the bowl and bring up the tail stock. The tenon can now be worked to remove or shape.



Sand the bottom but again take care working on the wings, which are best done with lathe stopped. Apply finish of choice to the whole piece.