



Welcome to my Timeless Turnings Newsletter!

Enjoy some entertainment, information, and — most of all — a glimpse into the whys and wherefores of my creative woodturning journey. Join me...

Inside...

Turning In the Now

Wood Words

Final Words

Turning In the Now

As I settle into the routines of working almost daily to keep up with the demands of working the weekend Market and the Harvest/Holiday shows, I see new patterns emerging in my creative journey. While professional production woodturners (which I never want to be!) seek out woods free of imperfections and defects because it will slow their output, more and more I seek out wood with continually greater *character*.

Granted, this gets me into tight situations, resulting in minor skirmishes related to personal safety, but the results are so satisfying when I achieve the balance of my vision and what the wood is telling me it wants to be, it's creatively satisfying and, therefore, worthwhile.



I find, however, that my penchant for that path of creative process conflicts with other traditional avenues of income-producing art, particularly commissions. I have made an internal decision to no longer take commissions, which come in regularly. I find it really difficult to say no, but they are far too stressful in my retirement.

I have true deadlines in building inventory for my normal marketing streams. Commissions disrupt that creative workflow. Finding the perfect piece of wood at the perfect moisture content to suit the needs of a commission is only the first step in the process. The path from there to completion is fraught with hazards: a catch of the gouge; the wood self-destructing on the lathe; or a slight mishandling in the critical finishing process — it all adds up to too much stress.



Considering that I want to put my heart into every piece I create, I can't in good faith continue to provide patrons with commission services. I love the creative process I employ when producing pieces for the Lithia Artisans Market and holiday shows — it provides a process that has no 'guardrails' or other encumbering parameters. It's yet another step forward in the creative journey that I'm on.

Wood Words: Ambrosia

In the previous newsletter, I discussed “spalting” and the beautiful effects it creates in wood. Now I’ll discuss a related phenomenon: Ambrosia. No, not the ubiquitous fruit salad in whipped cream served up on so many holiday season tables and potlucks. Nor the food and drink of the Greek gods!

Nay, here I speak of yet another process involving fungi that creates altogether different patterns in wood. Ambrosia is typically related to various species of maple (*Acer spp.*), but it can occur in other hardwoods/fruitwoods as well, although predominantly in the eastern United States.

The biological connection between spalting and ambrosia is fungi, while the difference in the two is in the delivery system, which is a fascinating process.

It was once thought that the patterns were created by excretions from the exoskeletons of the Ambrosia beetle. Further research has revealed that these little beetles (2-4mm) have a much more interesting life. They exist symbiotically with the host tree in that they don’t actually eat the tree as a food source. Rather they are mini-excavators that create very tiny tunnels into the tree where they then remove more wood to create small caverns. The next step is for them to transport microscopic spores from fungi to establish fungal gardens, which is the food source for the beetles and their larvae!

As the fungi also perform their dedicated work of consuming wood fibers for reforestation, the process is closely related to spalting, although the visual effects on the wood are distinctly different when it comes to Ambrosia. And now you know the Ambrosia story!

Final Words

I have decided to continue the newsletter on a quarterly basis for the foreseeable future — or until I run out of things that would be of interest to you. Many thanks to all of you for your support and for accompanying me on life’s creative journey.



Please visit my website at <https://www.tmbaker-woodturner.me> — look for new functional art from Timeless Turnings, which always ship FREE. You can also find archived newsletters if you wish to catch up on any you missed or want to revisit old favorites.