

Autumn Acorns

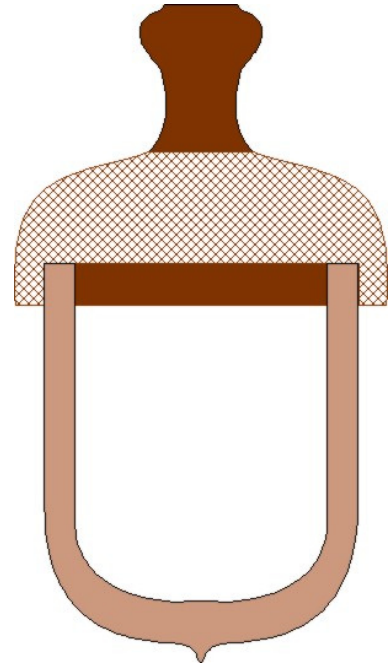
Project concept: November brings us crisp fall days, the rustle of cooler winds and the smells of Thanksgiving. Acorns have started to fall, and they serve as the inspiration for our next project, Acorn Boxes.

General dimensions: Thanksgiving dinners tend to be larger than other gatherings, so you will need plenty of stock. For the acorn cap you will need a piece of mahogany, or perhaps cherry or walnut, 3" long and 1.75" square. For the base, use a piece of red oak, 3 1/2" long and 1.25" square; butternut is also attractive for the base, but more expensive.

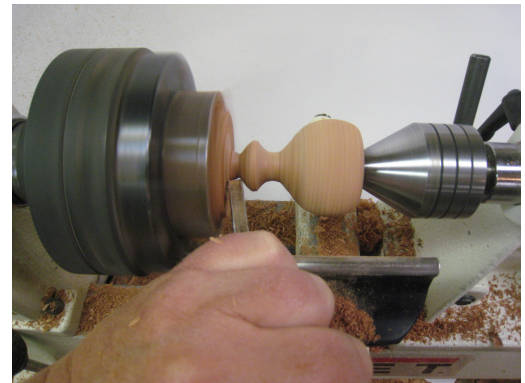
Start with the cap: Place the stock in a scroll chuck, set the lathe to approximately 1000 RPM and turn to round, approximately 1.50-1.65" diameter.



Using a 1 1/8" Forstner bit with a Jacobs chuck in the tailstock, bore out a recess about 3/8" deep, making sure to hold on to the chuck while boring or else it will tend to wander as it contacts the stock. You may want to use a small scraper to get rid of the point left by the Forstner bit, or not.



Turn the outside of the cap (you may want to bring up the tailstock for this), and rough out the stem. I think a more oval cap looks better than a more circular, so I make the length of the rounded part of the cap 1" to 1 1/8" long. Use a Bedan or 1/4" parting tool to rough out an area for the stem, then a skew or gouge as necessary to shape the stem.

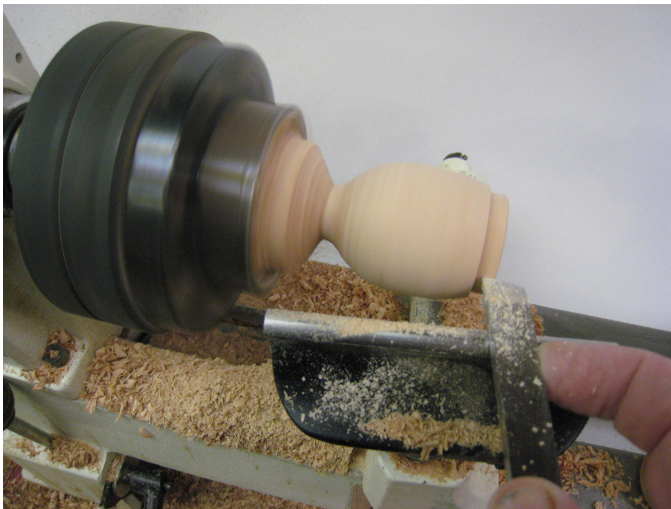


Use a "Texturing Tool" at 500 RPM to decorate the cap, (\$30-\$40 at Craft Supplies; I like 12 TPI.

<http://www.woodturnerscatalog.com/p/49/4528/Apprentice-Wagner-Texturing-Tool?term=texturing%20tools>).

Complete the stem; if necessary, reverse chuck the cap onto a jamb chuck to finish the stem. Part off. Apply finish.

On to the base. Hold the base stock in a 4 jaw chuck and turn to round at about 1000 RPM. Use a 7/8" or 1" core box" router bit in a Jacobs chuck in the tailstock, (if a core box is not available, a Forstner bit would do) and drill out the base of the nut; (I bore to the depth of the router bit, generally about 1.25").



Create a 1/4" long tenon on the end such that it has a tight fit with the nut cap; a Bedan or skew can be used here, but remove material slowly or you may have a loose fitting cap. If you remove too much material, just part off the offending material and make a slightly shorter base. Use a depth gauge to mark the bottom of the interior of the nut, then transfer that distance onto the exterior. From that mark, shape the bottom of the base, reverse chucking with a jamb chuck if necessary. Apply finish.

Note: to create a jamb chuck for the base, just bore out a block with the 1 1/8" Forstner bit – if the base fits in the cap snugly, it will fit in a block bored out with the Forstner bit.

Finishing: Finish manually with sanding sealer. If you finish on the lathe, particles from your application paper will get in the knurled area and are difficult to remove. Don't use a wax, because buffing it will leave threads in the knurled area.

Final thoughts: At our dinner, we place Thanksgiving jokes or riddles in the acorns and use them for table favors; during the meal each diner opens his acorn and tells his joke. Add an entry hole, a perch and a hanger, and you have a miniature birdhouse. Make bigger or smaller acorns as desired.

