



Chips & Chatter

Newsletter for the Silicon Valley Woodturners

September 2025

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President's Turn

It was great to see so many of you last month at our annual joint picnic with West Bay Woodturners. The picnic was well attended, and I even spotted a few folks eating burgers and salads off plates they had turned themselves. :-) Thanks again to WBW for hosting—next year it'll be SVW's turn.

Also last month, Bob Bley followed up his inlay demo with a hands-on *Inlay Practice* class. Judging by this month's President's Challenge entries, Bob's demo and class were a big hit. Lots of participation! Several people (myself included) mentioned it was their very first inlay project. For a club founded as an educational organization, I'd call that a big win.

Speaking of education, this month's laser presentation by James Craig was packed with information. He gave an excellent introduction to lasers and their use in woodturning, along with state-of-the-art advice for anyone considering their first laser purchase. Between his research and personal experience, James offered something new even for the seasoned laser users in the group. He also shared 3D-printed laser mounts he designed for his tailstock and banjo, which have opened up both technical and artistic embellishment possibilities.

This seems like a good moment to remind everyone that we have another communication resource in the Slack workspace we share with WBW. It's a great place for questions, follow-ups, show-and-tell, or just general woodturning chat. There's even a **#lasers** channel where discussion of James' presentation has continued. If you're not already on Slack, see Tina, James, or me for an invitation.

As I write this, we've just had another terrific educational experience with our latest professional demo. Mark Gardner joined us for a Saturday class, beginning with his unique way of transforming what could be a flawed bowl into a distinctive, fully functional piece of art. He went on to demonstrate a range of embellishing techniques—drawing on years of painting, carving, and texturing his signature turnings. It was an inspiring day, and I came away eager to try some of his methods myself.

Finally, a quick reminder of two great opportunities to show off your favorite turning techniques. Our October Challenge is “**Donation to Maker Nexus.**” Your donated turnings will be sold as MN fundraisers, which not only supports our host and ensures the longevity of our meeting space, but also gives SVW a big boost in visibility. The November President's Challenge is simply “**Embellished.**” That theme is open-ended enough that I'm hoping to see some of your most artistic work. :-)

Keep on turning and learning,
Kevin

Announcements

2026 Board nominations are open. Elections will be at the November 5 General Meeting

The newsletter write up for the Sept 20 Mark Gardner demo will be in next month's newsletter.

Chipping In Award



Congratulations to Dennis Lillis for receiving the Chipping In Award.

Some of the many jobs and roles that Dennis has done: woodmeister, anchorseal manager, sawdust sessions organizer and host, equipment helper, mentor, and frequent demonstrator. Dennis built the custom AV cart and is currently working on reducing the height of the club's demo lathe.

For his years of dedication to the club, Dennis is awarded Lifetime Membership in SVW - in addition to the \$10,000 gift certificate to Craft Supply.

Events Recap

Meeting Demo – Lasers for Woodturners

Presented by James Craig on September 3, 2025



Safety

- **Protect your eyes and skin.**
 - Get goggles with wavelength and Optical Density (OD) matching your laser
 - Avoid passing your hand or body through the laser beam path.
 - Detailed chart of lasers and colors at cascadelaser.com
- **Prepare to suppress a fire.**
 - Never leave a running laser unattended.
 - Keep on hand a fire blanket and/or a fire extinguisher. Water spray can also help address small fires before resorting to a fire extinguisher.
- **Avoid inhaling smoke and toxic fumes**
 - Dangerous materials include exotic woods, PVC (turns to chlorine gas), polycarbonate. Look up the toxicity of your material before you burn it.
 - Consider using a fume extractor.
 - Beilstein test will help detect chlorine in your material

Laser Types and Options

- Types: Diode, UV, CO₂, Fiber

Type	UV Laser	Diode Laser	Fiber Laser	CO ₂ Laser
Materials	Widest range of materials (even some clear) for engraving, but not cutting. Best for avoiding charring. Highest resolution.	Blue diode: Wood, leather, paper, plastics, and some opaque acrylics. IR diode: marking some metal, stone, ceramic, etc.	Best choice for metals, especially depth engraving and cutting metals: aluminum, steel, brass, some plastics, and ceramics.	Best for cutting on wood, paper, acrylic (including clear), leather, rubber, and ceramics. Lowest resolution.
Wavelength	355nm (UV)	405–455nm (blue) 1000–1100nm (short IR)	1000–2000nm (short IR)	10,000+ nm (long IR)
Cost	Starting at several thousand dollars	Consumer units start at a few hundred dollars and go to a few thousand dollars.	Starting at several thousand dollars	Starting at several thousand dollars

- Mechanisms:
 - **Galvo** - Uses rotating mirrors to direct the laser beam. Execution (cutting or rastering) is fast, but the work area is limited. Examples: LaserPecker, XTOOL.
 - **Gantry** - Like a CNC, the head moves along X-Y axis across the work area. Execution is slow, but supports larger pieces. Example: lasers at Maker Nexus.
- Settings:
 - **Power**: Strength of the laser beam. Depending on context, power may refer to the max available power of the system, or it may refer to the current setting. For example, a 50 watt system may be set at 50%.
 - **Speed**: Faster speeds are better for finer detail work. Slower speeds usually make deeper cuts, but may cause more flare ups and charring. For example, drawing slowly with a marker will result in blobs and thicker lines.
- Modes:
 - **Vector/cutting**: The laser beam will trace a line, cutting as it goes. Similar to a pen plotter or CNC cutting knife.
 - **Raster/shading**: The laser beam will pass over an area while burning a pattern or image. Similar to a grayscale inkjet printer.
- **Purchase recommendation**: Diode lasers, such as LaserPecker, are in the sweet spot due to the lower cost of entry. It is sufficient for signing the bottom of your bowls. The factory tripod can be replaced by a custom tailstock or banjo mount, making it more flexible to work on items still on the lathe. Or become friends with someone who has a laser!

Common Projects

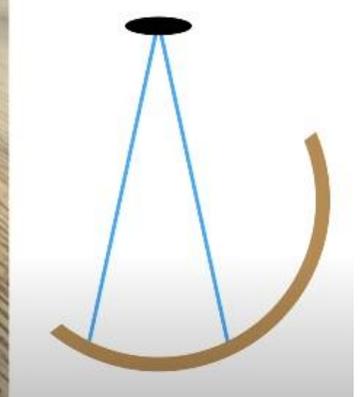


- Use a laser to cut patterns or shapes from stock wood to inlay into your bowl. In the example on the left, the same circle and man shapes were cut from two different wood pieces then interchanged. Another example is James' President's Challenge entry for inlay.

- Use a laser (on low power) to draw patterns and templates to use as guides for when using other tools, such as dremels or carving knives.
- Omtech marking spray - powder coat process using a laser to etch text or labels on metal tools.
- Rotary attachments. Other than a lathe. If using roller-based rotary attachment, be wary of working on objects that are not perfectly cylindrical as they will not rotate evenly. In general, if you can mount your laser on your lathe, indexing is more accurate than using a rotary attachment.

Uncommon Projects

- Most gantry lasers have a fixed focus distance and are best suited for flat material like plywood. Most gantry lasers are ineffective when working on 3D contoured surfaces, such as the side of a vase or inside of a bowl. However, a smaller galvo laser can be angled and oriented to maintain a consistent focal distance for sections of a bowl, allowing you to make repeating patterns one section at a time. In the illustration above, each circle pattern had a constant focus distance on the inside of the bowl as the bowl was indexed.



- Laser piercing. Mount the laser on the lathe and use the indexer. As on James' award winning bowl (left)

- Lasers can etch away finish, such as india ink, to leave behind unfinished wood. For sample, natural color text on a black background. In the example to the right, the piece was covered in multiple layers of paint. Quick passes of the laser etched away the paint to create the organic pattern along the bottom.



- Shape or relief cutting. Using fast speed will avoid charring the wood. Make multiple passes to burn away layers of wood. But wait between runs to allow the wood to cool.



Tips and Comments

- Laser workflow is more appropriate for repetitive mass production work rather than custom art work. Keep in mind that laser based artwork can appear machined and commercial. This may counter the “handmade” feel, if that is what you are trying to achieve.
- You can simulate a handmade feel by introducing noise and variances. For example, adding smoke or vibrations during laser operation. Or in your design file, draw text by hand rather than using system fonts. Or use an image of your signature.
- The variables in laser operation are power and speed. Experiment on scrap wood (ideally same type as your target piece) to understand what results to expect.
- Software: common software is Lightburn. Some laser models are not compatible with Lightburn. So if that is important to you, check before you buy.

Picnic



The Silicon Valley Woodturners and West Bay Woodturners joint club picnic was held on August 20 at Cuesta Park in Mountain View. Thanks to the WBW folks for hosting and cooking this year. The food was delicious and it was great to hang out with folks on a lovely summer evening.



For the SVW folks, the President's Challenge was to make Something For the Kitchen. Here are the top selections based on attendee votes.

Voting Results



First Place - Russell Mohr
Cocobolo concentric bowl with
layers cut from a single board



Second Place - James Craig
Pierced bowl with ink dye (see
Laser Demo for how it was done)



Third Place - Chip Krauskopf
Bowl with laser carved inlay

Member entries





Thanks Roman for contributing pictures

President's Challenge

The September President's Challenge was to make something with inlay.



Kat - Walnut bowl with opal inlay



Jerry - Sycamore box with red powder inlay



David - Green calcite in epoxy outlay



Dennis - Ammonite in mica; Finial box; Carob for no sanding bowl



Jim - cedar blocks with salmon serpentine and turquoise (hand carved and laser carved)



Scott - Granadillo pepper mill with turquoise



Felicia - Walnut bowl with opal inlay



James - poplar wood-in-wood inlay



Kevin - bowl with turquoise powder



George - Kabob maker (personal design) for the kitchen



Jim - vase with malachite; plate with lapis lazuli



Sang - Walnut with brass key filing inlay



Angela - Corn holders for kitchen; box and nametag make ups



Bob - colored calcite frog

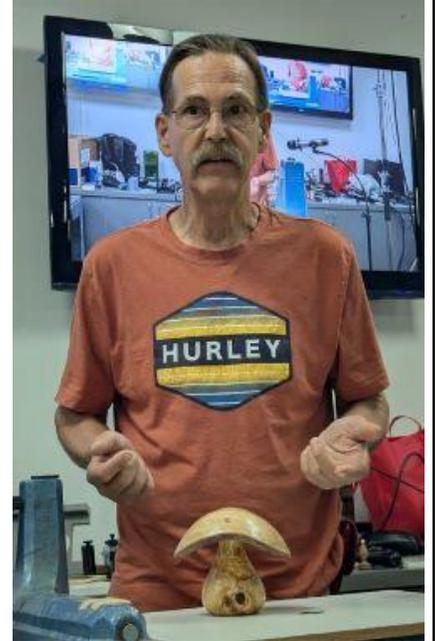
Show and Tell



Sang - Donut shaped walnut twigpot



Jerry - Maple Burl hollow form x3



Kelly - Evolved live edge mushroom



Jim - Matching winged bowls from nectarine



Dan - First hollow form from walnut burl and Guinness box



Dylan - Chinese pistache end grain hollow form



Edy - Maple burl doll with live edge collar

Mark Your Calendar!

Date	Event
Oct 1	General Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Demo: Rose Engine by Brad Bond- Pres Challenge: Donation to Maker Nexus
Oct 4	Sawdust Session: Hollowing Tools
Oct 29	Board Meeting
Nov 5	General Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Board of Directors election- Demo: Bird House Ornament by Dennis Lillis- Pres Challenge: Embellishment
Dec 4	Holiday Dinner <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pres Challenge: Ornament or gift

2025 Ironman Tracker

2025 Iron Man Status

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Joel Bauman	■											
Bob Bley									■			
Dan Boehmke									■			
Brad Bond			■									
Don Bonnett				■		■	■					
Roman Chernikov								■				
Edy Chung	■	■		■	■							
Calvin Breed							■					
Dean Caudle												
James Craig	■	■	■		■	■	■	■				
Steve Dahout	■	■		■	■	■						
Jerry Galli	■	■			■	■	■		■			
Angela Gunn	■	■		■	■	■	■	■				
Brian Havens	■	■	■									
Mark Koenig				■								
Jim Koren	■		■	■					■			
Kevin Lee	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■			
Dennis Lillis	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■			
Gordon Levin								■				
Jim Loney	■											
Scott Lucas				■	■	■		■	■			
Ken Malloy							■					
Michael Maring							■					
George Mathew	■	■	■	■	■	■		■				
Dylan McVoy		■										
Vic Mitnick	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				
Kat Napolitano		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Jim Ostrowski			■					■	■			
Sang Park	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Jessica Pineda	■											
Felicia Preston	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
David Vannier			■	■			■		■			
Milton West					■							
John Whittier	■						■					
	Name Badge	Weed Pot	Offset Bowl	Wig Stand or BoC Box	Twins, identical or fraternal	no sandpaper	Lidded Box	For the Kitchen	Inlay	Donation	Embellished	Ornament or Gift

About Us

Silicon Valley Woodturners Inc. is a non-profit [501\(c\)\(3\)](#) organization dedicated to education and having fun. Every position in the organization is held by volunteers. The dues we collect and the donations we get go towards teaching the members the art and craft of wood turning.

We are a local chapter (in the Bay Area of California) of the [American Association of Woodturners \(AAW\)](#).

President: Kevin Lee

Vice President/Program Dir/ Pens For The Troops Coordinator: Jerry Galli

Treasurer: Tom Stutz

Secretary: Felicia Preston

Member at Large: Dennis Lillis

Newsletter:

Photos provided by Angela Gunn.

To submit announcements or articles for an upcoming newsletter, please contact [Sang Park](#). Newsletters will typically be published 2 weeks after each general meeting.

www.svwoodturners.com

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