Chips & Chatter

Newsletter for the Silicon Valley Woodturners

October 2025

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President’s Turn

October 2025

I hope everyone has had a chance to enjoy some turning time recently. I’m looking forward to seeing your *embellished* pieces for next month’s President’s Challenge! While I don’t expect everyone to have a rose engine like the one Brad demonstrated last month—or even a laser like James used in his previous demo—we’ve certainly seen plenty of inspiring embellishment techniques lately. Between those two demos and all the methods Mark Gardner shared during his recent all-day session, I’m excited to see what you’ve picked up and how your creativity shines through.

Speaking of creative expression, it was a real treat to see one of **Brad Bond’s** pieces featured in the most recent *American Woodturner* magazine. His piece, which he first showed us back in February, was one of a select few chosen by jury for the 2025 AAW Member Exhibition. Congratulations, Brad!

Another AAW highlight involving one of our own: **Angela’s Bead Exchange** idea was a big hit at the Rocky Mountain Symposium! I’m told it may soon become an official program of AAW’s *Women in Turning* (WIT) subgroup, complete with its own web page. Congratulations, Angela!

As always, I’m proud to be part of this club with so many talented and generous makers. I’m not yet sure what I’ll be showing in November, but I’ve been having fun experimenting with some new techniques—and I hope you are too.

Kevin

Announcements

2026 Board nominations are open. Elections will be at the November 5 General Meeting. Also contact Kevin if you are interested in other volunteering opportunities with the club.
Sawdust Session (and Date Correction). October 25 and will be a Halloween session on hollowing tools. The session will be hands on, so space will be limited. Dennis will randomly draw for who can attend. Also plan to help clean up the wood pile after.
The **Holiday Dinner** will be at **Tomato Thyme** at 1560 Hamilton Ave, San Jose on December 3
Anchorseal is available ($15 per gallon for club members only). Contact Dennis before meetings to request. Also please collect one gallon containers with screw top lids (to prevent spills).
Maker Nexus will have a **silent auction** from Nov 14 to Dec 14. Some of the Presidents Challenge donations may be included. If you want to make additional donations, bring to the next General Meeting, on November 5.

Contribution

Turned Connections: Sharing Our Craft, One Bead at a Time

Woodturning is a solo craft, but it thrives on community. Through our clubs, social media, and symposiums, we constantly meet people who inspire us to enhance our skills and try new things.

Thinking about all the amazing turners I admire, I realized I wanted a tangible way to commemorate those connections - but I definitely didn't need 40 bowls! This is where **Turned Connections** was born.

The idea is simple: connecting through our craft and sharing a small piece of what we create. Lanyard beads are the perfect exchange item. They're easily shared, can be used on keychains or lanyards, and each one represents a person who inspired you.

With WIT's support and encouragement, we kicked off the initiative at the Rocky Mountain Woodturning Symposium. I worried I'd be giving away turned scraps, but the idea was an immediate hit! Attendees were excited to see all the beads and pick their favorites. One lady wired all her beads to look like bees; everyone marveled at their beauty and wanted one. I also had beads to collect autographs from demonstrators.

The enthusiasm was contagious, with everyone looking forward to the next opportunity to participate. I encourage you to not wait! Start sharing your Turned Connections within our club, with online friends, and with both the women and men in your turning circle.

Let's connect with everyone in the hobby, one bead at a time.

Angela Gunn

Events Recap

Meeting Demo - Rose Engine - Geometric Alchemy

Presented by Brad Bond on October 1, 2025

Showcased at AAW Beginnings Exhibit, Brad's fusion of acentric / texturing / rose engine

For this month's demo, Brad introduced us to the theory and practice of using a rose engine

A rose engine is a specialized lathe using disk templates - or rosettes - to impart rhythmic cuts to the work piece creating geometric patterns.

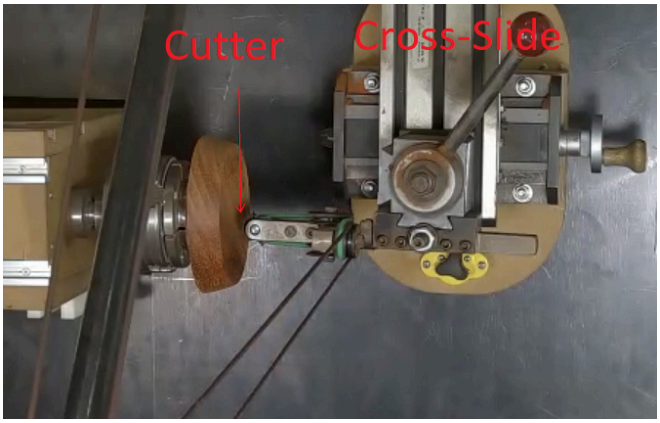
Rose Engine Components:

- **Headstock** - Holds the work piece and can rock back and forth - or even slide in and out. In a rose engine, the headstock moves while the cutter position remains stationary.
- **Cutter and drive system** - the drive system includes a motor that turns the cutter. In Brad's demo they are coupled by a long elastic belt. The reason for the long belt is to dampen vibrations from the motor. Also the motor is not directly mounted on the metal framework. It is insulated by multiple layers of MDF.
- **Rosettes** - Are shaped disks that act as cams that move the headstock back and forth. Rosettes may also have holes to index the position on the work piece.

- **Rubbers** - The part that bumps off the cams to move the headstock. The rubbers may have different shapes and sizes. For example, a smaller/pointy rubber will track a rosette with high fidelity. Whereas a large flat rubber will smooth out a pattern.
- **Cross-slide** - The cutter assembly is mounted on a cross-slide or an X-Z table to control the cutter position.

Cutter Movement:

A rose engine cutter spins and is omni-directional. Unlike a traditional gouge, it can cut either on the near-side (rotating down) or on the far-side (rotating up) of the workpiece, giving the rose engine additional flexibility. For example, switching the cutter assembly to the far-side of the rose engine will result in an inverse of the rosette pattern. See image on right [Editor: Sorry I had to cut part of the right item]



The Critical Slider:

If you are building or upgrading your own rose engine, consider spending up on the cross-slide or X-Z table. As the headstock moves, all of the force is transmitted to the cutter. The cross-slide is basically the foundation of the cutter assembly. So a rigid high quality foundation will reduce problems from loose gear tolerance and alignment deflection, which can have a large impact on how the details of your design come through.

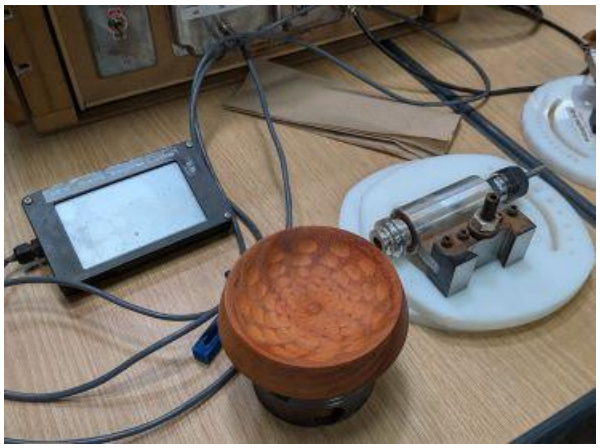
Wood Recommendation:

Brad recommends these two wood varieties: African Blackwood and boxwood. Other dense exotics such as cocobolo or ironwood are good for capturing details. As these woods are expensive to practice on some people use wood stabilized or hardened with cactus juice. But Brad finds that hardwood end grain is often sufficient to capture details.

Live Demonstration:

For the demonstration, Brad used the rose engine to cut a spiraling flower pattern on the inside of a bowl.

- He used the indexer on the rosette to make spiral designs. After each rotation, he moved the cutter position to the next outer "ring" and advanced the indexer on the rosette by one. This laid the petals on the new ring offset from those on the previous ring.
- He positioned the new ring by turning the crank in the X-direction. In the flat of the bowl, near the center, changes in the X-direction were sufficient. But on the curved sides of the bowl, Brad had to also adjust in the Z-direction.
- Brad used sound to gauge the aggressiveness of the cutter. A mechanic's pressure gauge is also an option. But it is important to monitor pressure. Cutting too aggressively may cause the drive belts to pop off their guides. This may cause the cutter to stop and jam into the piece.
- Each pass may require multiple rotations of the spindle. If the rotation speed is slow, a pass may take several minutes.
- A good supplement to a rose engine is a 3D printer, to fabricate custom parts and ro$ette$.
- Here is a picture of the finished design from the demo. Also pictured: rose engine controller, cutter, and white rosette disks



Brad's Rose Engine Complexity Equation:

$$\text{Complexity} = \{(\text{Rosette} + \text{Motion}) \times \text{Cutter}^{\text{Indexing}}\} \times \text{Artist}$$

Many factors go into a rose engine design. It is a challenge to consistently make the same design multiple times. And there are no standardized notations for designs. There are recipes that may indicate some information such as rosette shapes, but many steps can not be conveyed systematically. For example, positions and motions may be referenced by "number of turns on the crank" which vary with machines and users.

In short, there are easier and cheaper ways to decorate your work pieces, especially for repeated productions. For example, a three-dimensional CNC can quickly and systematically carve out a design. The Rose engine allows you to work on unique, artistic and intricate pieces. But much of the value comes from working with the equipment itself - with its quirks and steam-punk appeal.

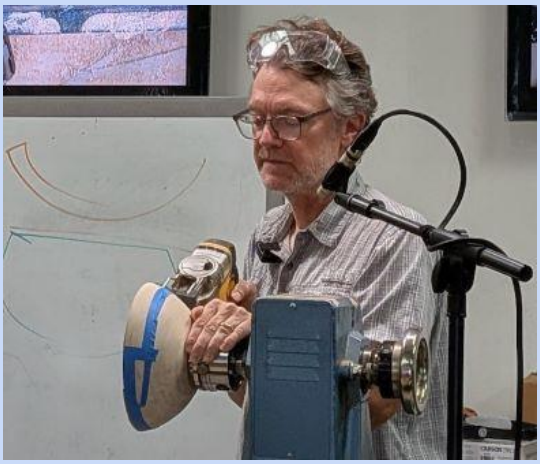
Brad indicated he is open to collaboration. For example, if you have an idea that combines inlay with a rose engine design, he is happy to discuss.

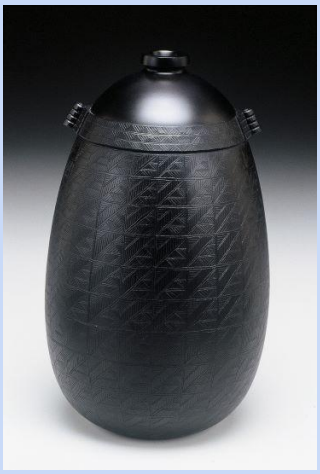
Other References:

- Brad's Youtube with rose engines: Finding Peace in your Grain
- Brad's rose engine was acquired from the Plumier Foundation
- Society of Ornamental Turners: the-sot.org
- Ornamental Turners International: ornamentalturners.org
- For more inspiration on Jon Sauer's works: jonsauer.com or this article.

Professional Demo - Mark Gardner

Presented on September 20, 2025





Mark Gardener has been turning for 30 years. He has a studio in North Carolina, and travels around the country to teach and demonstrate. He finds inspiration from African and South Pacific woodcraft for their geometric but approachable designs. During his demonstration to the SVW, he explained some of the insight and decision making that he incorporated into his own style - and the techniques he used to achieve that style.

Agenda:

- Cutting rim of bowl
- Surface embellishments: carving and engraving
- Patterns and designs
- Painting
- And sharpening

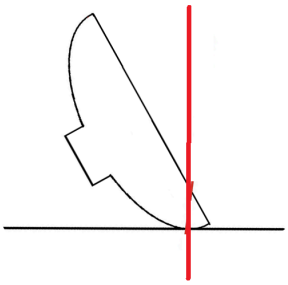
Rim-Carved Bowl

This is a bowl where the rim is carved away at an angle. Either to remove defects and cracks, or for creative appeal.

1. Mark started by making a jam chuck (cherry) for a bowl blank (silver maple)
    a. Using a roughing gouge to turn the cherry into a cylinder
    b. Using spindle gouge to taper the tenon
    c. Reverse the jam chuck to mount on the tenon, and round off the top.
2. With the bowl blank mounted between the jam chuck and the live center, Mark turned the bowl exterior.
    a. He used shearing cuts, with the gouge angled slightly upwards, to make smoother cuts.
    b. Rule of thumb: 90% of the work on the exterior is done with the bowl mounted on the jam chuck. The remaining 10% is done with the bowl mounted on the tenon, using light brushing strokes to remove tool marks.
3. Using a 1/2 inch bowl gouge, Mark turned the inside of the bowl in three stages:
    a. The first stage covered about 1-1/2 inches from the rim. In the demo, he kept the rim broader to have a slight undercut. He completed to final thickness before proceeding to the next stage.
    b. The next stage covers the “corner” of the bowl. It was important to first complete the first stage, as he used that as a runway to lead into the second stage.
    c. The third stage is the bottom of the bowl, which can be tricky since the RPM at the center is the same, but the surface speed is slower. Advice is to take your time as you approach the center.
    d. Mark used a double ended caliper to check relative thickness while working on the three stages.
4. Since the rim will be cut later, Mark avoided any work on the rim at this point.

5. While he skipped this step in the demo, this is the point where Mark would have finished the interior of the bowl: sanding and applying any finish. He typically uses walnut oil mixed with beeswax since it is food-safe.
6. He scored the exterior of the bowl with spiraling passes with a spindle gouge to add texture for painting later.
7. Once the bowl was completed, he had to figure out where and how to make the cut. This may be to remove a flaw / crack / knot in the wood. Or it may simply be decorative.

    a. In his demo, Mark made one vertical cut and removed the wood to the right (when looking with bowl bottom down). Removing to the left is also fine. Note that removing the wood to the right may be more comfortable when holding the bowl with your left hand.
    b. Mark used a pencil to trace how he wanted to cut the bowl. Then taped along the line. Duplicating the line on the inside of the bowl may also be useful for referencing the line while cutting.
8. Mark typically uses a bandsaw to cut the bowl rims, making sure the bowl is supported at the point of contact with the blade, as shown in picture on right. **Be careful to not get too far ahead, where your cut can be unsupported on the bandsaw.**



    a. In the demo, Mark left the bowl mounted on the lathe and used a jigsaw to cut it. He kept the jigsaw stationary, while using his other hand to rotate the bowl into the jigsaw.
    b. He started the cut from the taper and ended his cut where it met the vertical cut. Then he repositioned his jigsaw to make the vertical cut - carefully to not over cut - to free the cutoff.

    c. In this case, Mark's rim bevel sloped down away from the center.
    d. For a calabash or closed bowl, he would slope the rim down towards the center of the bowl. In other words, the rim bevel slope is square (90 degrees) to the outside wall. This appears to work aesthetically and is also consistent with keeping the contact point flat when using a bandsaw.
9. To clean and finish the rim surface, Mark used a rasp and sandpaper on sticks.

Done

Surface Texture

Mark already demonstrated one technique, using a spindle gouge to make spiraling grooves on the outside of the maple bowl (before cutting the rim). He demonstrated two other techniques on the cherry jam chuck: One on the exterior and one on the interior.

Parallel Scratches on the Exterior

1. Mark remounted the cherry jam chuck and prepped the surface using 120 grit sandpaper to even it out before texturing.
2. In this example, the texturing tool was a coarse (not fine) circular wire brush. A welder's wire brush could also work. Note: Mark's wire brush was circular, but it doesn't need to be circular since it will be held directly by hand. However, the circular form may be convenient when resharpening the tips of the brush by mounting it on a power drill to run against a sharpening stone. Since most brushes are not HSS, be advised that they can gum up grinding wheels.
3. Before actually texturing, Mark used a spindle gouge to cut grooves to frame the target work area to be textured. You can also apply masking tape to protect the outside area.
4. At a low lathe speed, he used a light touch to wiggle the wire brush over the surface to create horizontal scratches texture. On cherry, the outer layers (early wood) are softer than the inner layers. So the resulting scratches may be smoother. On the other hand, ring porous woods - such as oak, ash or locust - may have rougher scratches in the texture. This is not good or bad, it's about the look you want to achieve.
5. Even with subtle texturing, painting will still make the pattern pop out.

Parallel Grooves on the Interior

1. For demonstration, Mark turned the cherry jam chuck into a shallow end grain bowl using a bowl gouge.
2. Then he made a series of circular grooves, using (Trent Bosch) hollowing tools. At the top of the bowl, he used a curved hollowing tool. Towards the flat center of the bowl, he used a straight neck tool.
3. Once painted and sanded, the circular grooves show a balanced contrast that draws the eye in.

Pattern Layout and Carving on a Hollow Form

For this demonstration, Mark used a mostly-premade hollow form - which technically was a box shaped like a hollow form with a hole in the lid- to carve a repeating pattern.

1. The first step is to draw a grid on the work piece for the repeating pattern. Find a grid dimension that goes with the characteristics of your piece.
   In this demo, Mark used the size of a rim handle for the size of his grid cells.

2. Mark used jam chuck with a tapered tenon that fit into the opening of his hollow form. See image on right. Together with the tail stock, he used the lathe to hold his work piece between centers like a clamp.
3. With a pencil Mark sketched reference ticks to use as grid indexes. Note: it helps to align the horizontal lines to cover the joint between the box pieces.
4. Mark used a custom pen holder - basically a L shaped jig with a spot to hold a pencil at the height of the centers. He used this jig to draw the vertical lines (hold the pencil steady while rotating the piece) and horizontal lines (hold the piece steady, while moving the pencil jig). By doing this for each horizontal and vertical index marker, he drew a grid pattern.

   a. Note: you can use just a pencil on the tool rest to easily draw vertical lines, but you need a jig to draw the horizontal lines. Especially if the line is not along a flat continuous surface.
   b. Mark did not use the lathe indexer since its spacing did not conform to keep his grid cells square shaped.
5. At this point, Mark had to determine what design pattern to use. He had a sample board, with a variety of patterns ranging from tight geometric shapes to loose flowing patterns. In this demo, he used the geometric pattern.

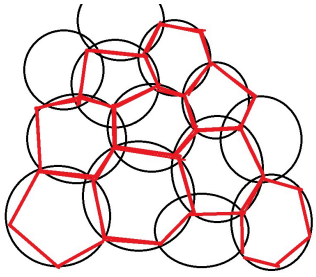
6. Tools
   a. Carving tools. The benefit of a powered carving tool is that the tips are mounted on springs so they only cut when there is pressure. This allows the carver to make fine cuts without over-shooting.
      - Automach - higher end power carver
      - Ryobi - less featured than Automach, but is cheaper and similar effectiveness
      - Proxxon - another option for power carver

b. Flexcut chisels - available in various shapes and sets. They also fit in an optional handle to use as an inter-changeable palm chisel for hand carving.
c. Engraver - engravers work by hammering a sharp carbide point. The results look more organic than cuts from a carving tool.
    - Dremel brand engraver - common and effective. But gets hot and is top heavy for long use
    - Sioux pneumatic engraving pen - requires an air compressor, but it is easy to handle and it remains cool.

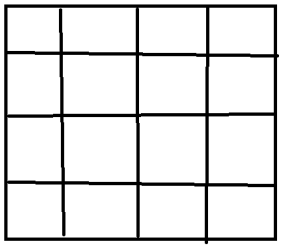
Organic Polygon Field

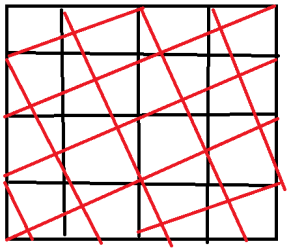
In the previous example, Mark created a square grid that wrapped around his work piece. In this example, Mark demonstrated how he makes a field of random polygon cells.

1. To create the field, he started by drawing overlapping circles on his piece.
2. Then he drew connecting lines between the points where the circles overlapped, creating a random mix of pentagons, hexagons, etc. In other words, he did not try to draw the polygons directly, instead he used the random circles to articulate the polygons.
    a. Mark explained a similar application to the square grid. He used that grid -like a graphpaper -to create another grid that was rotated. By using points on the first grid, he drew new connecting lines. In his example, he went right 2 and up 1, which he found to be more pleasing than 45 degrees. This is a great technique to add a little movement or uniqueness to your own designs.



Random field - use intersections between circles to make polygons





Twisted grid - use intersection points of a regular grid to create a new offset grid

3. With the mesh grid in place, Mark drew the in-fill hash for each cell.
4. Mark did not demonstrate the engraving of the full pattern. But he explained two approaches.

a. Engrave the hash marks AND engrave the polygon shapes, where the polygon shapes are cut away. After sanding, the paint remains and is visible, as shown in the cup image above.
b. Engrave the hash marks only. Do not engrave the polygon shapes, so that the shapes show as wood after sanding. This is shown on the right image.

Painting

Milk Paint is an all natural finish that is durable and rich in earthy colors. The traditional formula uses milk protein and lime as the binders with clay and earth pigments for color. Milk paint does not peel over time when it weathers. It also dries hard, so it can be easily sanded. Or it can be burnished with steel wool. The brand that Mark endorsed is "Old Fashioned" which was acquired by Sweet Pickins.

- It comes in powder form. Make only what you need. Once you mix the powder with water milk paint only lasts about a day before it starts curdling.
- Milk paint on wood can be porous. So after it dries and you have sanded it, you can apply a protective coating. Mark uses Krylon Matte Finish in a spray can. Then for smooth areas, he uses steel wool to burnish. And for textured areas, he uses a soft brass brush, which can reach into the nooks. Repeat as necessary.
    - Brass brush (aka finishing brush or burnishing brush) are available from Rio Grande, a jewelry supply catalog. The brushes can collect dust and pigments. So Mark keeps different brushes for clear / light / dark.
- To make light colors such as yellow more vibrant, try applying a white base coat. Mark recommends two to three colored coats.

Sharpening Jig

To sharpen chisels, gouges, knives and other tools, Mark created a jig that mounts on a lathe. It is made from three disks/layers of MDF and green honing compound.

- Starting from the left, the first protrusion is V-shaped to dress the inside edges of chisels.
- The middle protrusion is a round bead to dress the inside of gouges.
- The third part is on the right. It is flat to dress the outside edges of all tools. Both the edge and sides are active. It is a larger diameter to allow dressing a knife horizontally without its handle running into the protrusions.

For more inspiration, visit Mark's website: www.markgardnerstudio.com

President's Challenge

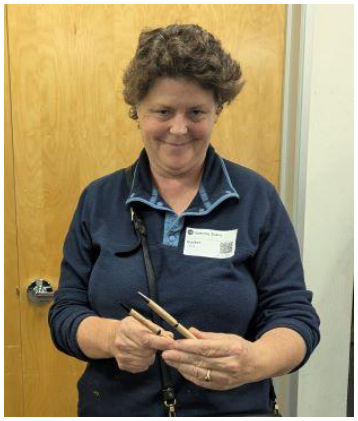
The October President’s Challenge was to make something to donate to Maker Nexus.

George - Bowl

Steve - Pen

Dennis - Pearwood bowl

Edy - Pen holder



Tammy - Pen

Angela - Bird house

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<td> 
Brad - Platter</td>
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Bob - Bowl</td>
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Kevin - Black acacia platter</td>
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Sang - Drop spindles and toothpick holder</td>
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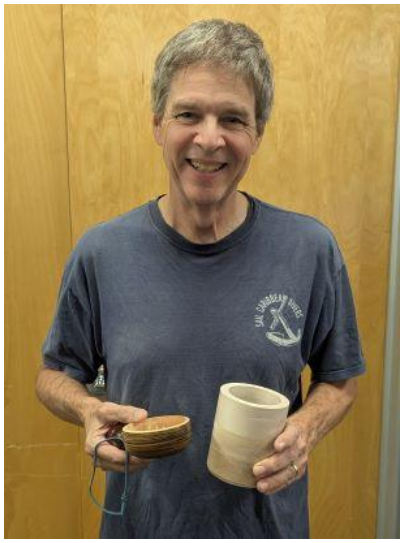
Not pictured: Kat's bowl for Presidents Challenge

Show and Tell

Brad - Hollow forms

Dylan - Hollow forms

Dennis - Threaded boxes



Scott - Self-made classifier set (for sorting crushed rocks)

Not pictured: Tina's bowl from Glenn Lucas' class

Mark Your Calendar!

Date	Event
Oct 25	**Sawdust Session: Hollowing Tools** Space is limited so Dennis will randomly select attendees
Oct 29	**Board Meeting**
Nov 5	**General Meeting** - Board of Directors election - Demo: Bird House Ornament by Dennis Lillis - Pres Challenge: Embellishment
Dec 4	**Holiday Dinner @ Tomato Thyme in San Jose** - 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	■	■	■	■	■	■						
Tammy Estes										■		
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**	**Vig Stand or BoC Box**	**ns, 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.

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www.svwoodturners.com