

## Trivetal Pursuits

Perfect time of year for gifts...and great use of thin pieces of pretty wood.

October, 2023



*Trivets of redwood, bay laurel, tan oak, & black acacia. (Deck boards are 5.5" for reference)*

We turners regularly liberate hidden glories from their raspy bark enclosures. We get to see the first glimpses of enchanting ripples, pluripotent birdseyes, exotic swirls, intriguing knots, gaudy crotches, and natural color.

In our quest for even more 'liberation' events, we inevitably wind up with small pieces of wood with appealing figure...but insufficient depth or diameter to make even a shallow plate. Maybe there's an unreparable defect on one side with great beauty on the other. Short rectilinear cut-offs from cabinet work may flash great grain...but seem too short for practical use as a board. Most of us can't bear to throw these away, but they eventually become...clutter. What to do? There's just not a lot of call for shallow cufflink receptacles in modern Santa Cruz...and jewelry & rings deserve a bit deeper hollow.



*Trivet Candidates: Left: Black Acacia offcut--sound and pretty--5" diameter—but thick on one near side, quite thin opposite. Won't make a bowl, but has about 3/4" usable depth.*

*Right: Bay Laurel burl cut-off--too shallow for a little bowl, but it deserves to be admired!*

**Opportunity!** As enthusiasts for natural beauty, lots of us woodworkers also like flowers...or somebody at home does! Glass vases, water pitchers, and wine bottles can make water rings on a wooden table, and ceramic vases sometimes scratch a revered surface. Rocks...even the shiny ones...can scratch a table surface that took days to sand and finish.

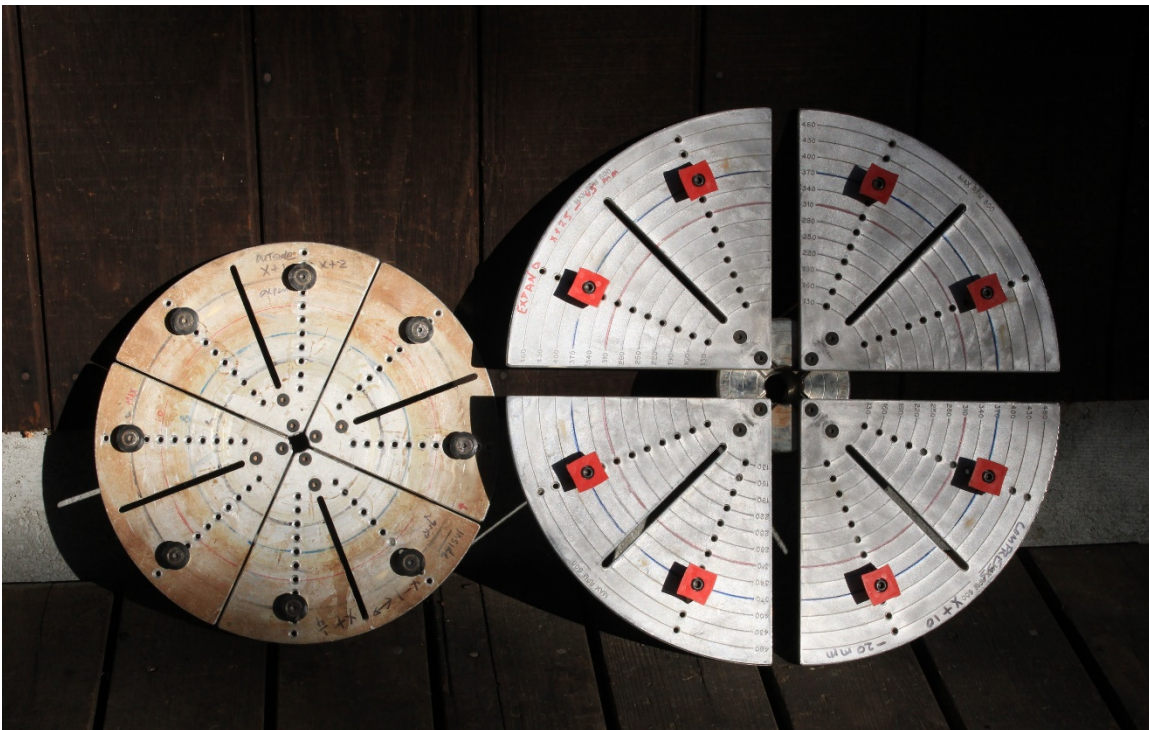
**Solution?** **Make trivets on the lathe.** Practical at home, excellent for casual gifts, & appealing as craft fair items. Really easy, fast, and satisfying



## Turner's Notes:

- **Size range**—Blanks 4" minimum for stability up to 8" diameter, give or take. Thickness 1/2" to 1". (3/4" seems ideal.) Bandsaw a circle.
- **Turning:** Upper surface **simple and flat**.
  - Scoop the underside. Concavity creates a stable ring support, just like a bowl...and reduces wicking (and trapping) spilled water and condensation beneath the trivet.
  - Avoid decorative beads, grooves, and ridges on the upper surface--easy to catch a tippy vase and spill. These embellishments also attract unsightly detritus in typical trivet use. You want to be able to simply rinse or sponge it off!
- **Chucking:** As always, there are lots of ways to mount the blank.
  - Faceplate with shallow screws in the bottom where the holes will not be seen. Later...deftly fill the holes or make a decorative groove to obscure them when you're finished.
  - A glue-on waste block can be time consuming if you're doing multiples, but it's definitely simple and affordable.
  - Club treatise on glue blocks...safety and practicality:
    - [Microsoft Word - Glue Blocks Jan 2022.docx \(scwoodturners.org\)](#)
  - Jam chucks. This will take the form of a sacrificial disc with a 1/2" deep, cylindrical opening to grip the smaller blanks. If you are doing a bunch of these, line them up in order of ascending diameter, and progress from the smaller of your blanks to the larger ones with sequential cuts. Minimal waste and max efficiency!
  - Adjustable "jaws" make it easy to cope with a collection of pieces of different diameters. (photo below) \*
  - Cut a mortise on the bottom in order to make it easy to finish the top. The mortise is fast, secure with a well balanced disc, and it doubles as that concave scoop. You can blend it out \*\* when finished or leave it...which enables you to remount it to repair the surface. Photos below
- **Finish:** Best with a durable, impermeable, water resistant, scratch resistant film finish such as polyurethane. You decide the matte vs gloss choice.
  - Alcohol dissolves or etches shellac...not a great choice.
  - Most oils and waxes will make spots and stains with sustained moisture contact...that's too much upkeep!
- **Hints 1:** Raising a trivet slightly off the table surface eliminates the water trapping hassle. Use stick-on, clear, colorless silicone "bumper" discs or squares, available at every hardware store. Three feet make a stable platform (the "tri" in trivet). Larger diameters (8-12") may call for 4 or 5 "feet," especially if designed for heavy vases or eccentric placement. photo below \*\*\*

- **Hints 2:** Avoid felt "feet," as they can trap water for days...occupational hazard for flower bases and bad for underlying wood. Worse...quite a few commercial felt pads contain dyes that leach out and make a nasty stain...a brown "mole" or a green polka dot on a maple tabletop.
- **Hints 3:** Trivets, like any other opaque object in a sun-exposed tabletop, will create pigment anomalies on a table surface if they are left in one place for a long time.
- **Caution with hot objects:** Trivets were traditionally made of decorative metal, elevated above the tabletop, intended to support stove-hot pans, serving bowls, or plates. Polyurethane may blister or scar with high heat. Use raw wood or traditional ceramics of generous diameter for those trivetal hot pursuits.



\* Adjustable large jaws. Righteously convenient...but not cheap, and maybe a nuisance for repetitive work if you don't commit a chunk to that dedicated purpose. *Hint*—an electric screwdriver with a hex bit makes dimension changes really quick.

\*\* Blended mortise to refine the bottom. So many ways to do this! However...leaving the functional mortise is not lazy! It allows quick and easy re-chucking to repair the top surface if damaged.

Photos of blended mortise finish treatment next page





*Black Acacia 5" left and figured Black Walnut 7.5" right. We all know that companion turners are going to check the bottom of your work!*

\*\*\* Silicone feet. 3 are enough for a small trivet, better 4-6 for larger ones to avoid tipping. These are "grippy" and non-skid for security, too.



*Bottom view: Nicely figured bay laurel 7.5" disc with silicone disc bumpers/feet.*

Enjoy the shop!  
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