



SKILL-BUILDING PROJECT

Small-Scale BIRD FEEDER ORNAMENT

Kurt Wolff-Klammer

I have been making ornaments over the past couple of years and presenting my work at craft shows. I had been making a mini birdhouse ornament, and people always asked me where the bird was. This got me thinking about where you see birds. It is not at a birdhouse—it is at a bird feeder! This led me to design the bird feeder ornament you see in this article. It is a simple and fun project on a small scale. You'll do a bit of both bowl and spindle turning. Here's how to make one.

MATERIALS



This project comprises five elements that are great practice for beginning turners. From the ornament's top to bottom (left to right in the photo): a top finial, a "roof," a center spindle, a tray, and a bottom finial.

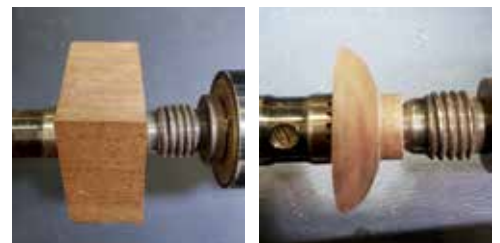
The top finial, center spindle, and bottom finial can be turned from a pen blank measuring 5" long × 3/4" square (13cm × 19mm). The roof and tray will require two small blanks measuring 1/2" thick × 1 3/4" square (13mm × 4cm). I often use contrasting woods for visual effect; in this case, I selected walnut and maple.

STEP 1

MOUNT AND SHAPE ROOF/TRAY

The roof and tray are essentially two small bowl forms, turned in endgrain orientation. This process is the same for making both components. Mount one of the two blanks between centers.

Then shape the workpiece, making about half of the material into a bowl profile and the other half into a chucking tenon.



STEP 2 REMOUNT, HOLLOW, DRILL

Remount the work in a chuck and hollow the bowl slightly, mainly just to make the ornament a little lighter.



Drill a 1/4"-(6mm-) diameter hole all the way through the center of the bowl.

STEP 3 JAM CHUCK, REMOVE TENON, SAND

Make a small jam chuck from a piece of waste wood. Turn a spigot to fit snugly into the hole in the roof/tray. If you carefully test-fit the jam chuck while the lathe is spinning, a tell-tale burn mark will appear on the spigot, indicating where more material should be removed.

Use tailstock support when turning away the tenon. Then remove the tailstock to sand the workpiece, always pushing toward the headstock.

Repeat steps 1 through 3 to create the other "bowl" that will become either the roof or the tray. I wait until both are completed to decide which is which. If one is slightly wider, I use that one for the roof, or top.



STEP 4 TURN THE CENTER SPINDLE



Mount the spindle blank in a chuck with about 3" (8cm) of wood extending from the chuck. Rough-turn the piece and form a small tenon at the tailstock end, sized to fit into the 1/4" hole drilled through the roof/tray. I like the shoulder and length of the tenon to be only about 1/8" (3mm).



Starting at the tailstock end, form a slight concave shape on the center spindle. The length should be about 2" (5cm). Then create a 1/4"-diameter tenon on the headstock end. Use a thin parting tool to part off the spindle, leaving the tenon about 1/8" long.



STEP 5 TURN TOP AND BOTTOM FINIALS



To turn the top and bottom finials, you can use the remainder of the blank used for the center spindle, though you

may have to loosen the chuck jaws and extend more wood.

I give the top finial a rounded end with a slight concave shape flaring out towards the base. Whatever shape you choose for the top finial, note that in a later step, you will need to drill a hole through it so the ornament can be hung. Form a 1/4" tenon that will be glued into the hole in the roof/top.

Turn a bottom finial from the same stock. I like to make an arrow shape and of course a 1/4" tenon to fit in the hole in the tray.

STEP 6 TEST-FIT AND GLUE THE PIECES

Now that you have made all five pieces, test their fit. Ensure the tenons do not contact each other inside the roof and tray. If they do, sand the tenons shorter.

When you are satisfied with the fit, glue the parts together.



STEP 7 ADD BIRDSEED IN THE TRAY

Mix up some epoxy and coat the ornament tray. While the epoxy is still wet, dip the piece into some birdseed. Let the glue dry. I purchased some dollhouse birds that 1:12 scale and glued one so it appears to be perched on the tray.



STEP 8 DRILL HOLE IN TOP FINIAL

Drill a small hole in the top finial as a means to hang your bird feeder ornament. I like to use beading wire to create a hanging loop. Lastly, I like to finish the ornament with a semigloss spray finish. ■



Kurt Wolff-Klammer, a hobby woodturner and member of the Chicago Woodturners, started turning ornaments to sell at a local church Christmas sale. Then he began exploring his own ornament designs. Follow Kurt's journey on Instagram, @wkswoodworking.