

Prepping Gourds

Drying/Curing Gourds

Gourds need a year to grow, dry and cure before they can be used for crafting and painting. Since gourds are 90 % water they do go through a mouldy period, but you leave them alone and let them do their thing. A good gourd will dry anywhere. I keep my gourds outside in a deep plastic swimming pool. Keep the squirrels away, and leave them alone. The plastic pool seems to be hard for the squirrels to get into so they do not bother my gourds as they dry and cure.

Melynda



I live in the far north and do not grow my own gourds, however I often purchase green ones and bring them home to dry.

I leave them outdoors all winter, through rain, snow and sleet. If they are mature they will not wrinkle or rot. If the gourd wasn't mature when it came off the vine it will often wrinkle up and rot. I have been told by growers that the gourd should not come off the vine until the stem is brown and dry.

I find that gourds left outdoors in the elements are very easy to clean. Whatever you do, do not make a hole for the moisture to seep out, this allows bacteria into the gourd and it will surely wrinkle up and rot :) Don't throw those wrinkled gourds away, they make unique critters.

Rhoda

Cleaning the exterior

Once a gourd is dried and cured you can scrub off that mould and it will be ready to paint and craft. Gourds love rainy days because it keeps the gourds wet, the key to cleaning gourds is for them to stay wet for about 15-30 minutes and to use a metal scrubber. If you do not have a rainy

day and you need to clean gourds fill a tub with water, and put a wet towel over the gourds. Let them soak then use your metal scrubber to clean off the mould. Some people add a little bleach to kill off the mould. The bottom line to cleaning gourds for them to stay wet and use the metal scrubber.

Melynda

I use very much the same method for cleaning my gourds as Melynda does. I fill the tub with water, a bit of dish soap and bleach, then lay a large bath towel over top, wet it down good and let them sit. I then use a pot scrubber, the gourds clean up beautifully. Some gourds will have a stubborn 'whitish' membrane on them, for these I use a dull kitchen knife for scraping it off and often more soaking.

It is best to clean gourds outdoors, you don't want those nasty mould spores in your home.

When cleaning your gourds, note the beautiful mould patterns. These are often used in design elements of a finished piece.

Once the gourds are cleaned, place them in a warm, sunny area to dry. It is best to let the gourd dry completely before beginning a project.

Rhoda

Cleaning the Interior

If you are going to cut your gourd open you will need to clean the interior. There are many tools and methods for doing this. I like to clean as much as I can from the inside using the large metal spoon, then I follow up scraping from the sides with the two sizes of scrapers, (see photo on next page) which are actually clay tools.

For a smooth finish on the interior I use the tool with the two 'pot scrubbers' attached.

Often I will finish the inside with a nice paper



Painting terms

Base coating: putting one solid color on the gourd.

Blocking in color: When you place solid color where it is to go. Example: flesh tone for face, white for beard and hair, red for Santa suit.

Loading the brush: Used with shading, In order to get a nice shaded blended look, dip your flat brush one point with a dark color and the other point with a lighter color filling the brush half with a dark and half with a light

color, then drag the dark side next to the area you are wanting shaded darker. Example for eyes on the out side of the eyeball and for shading around Santa's belt the black would be next to the belt and red on the other side of the brush.

Frayed brushes are good for making hair as you can see in the picture.

Melynda

Paints:

There are a variety of Acrylic paint brands and through out the years I have found favourite colours in certain brands. This will be indicated in each painting project throughout the book.

The the colour and brand will be listed.

As you begin painting with gourds you too will find your favourite brands and colours.

I use many different types of paint, I will list them with each project. I also like to use leather dyes, gilders paste, pencils, etc.

When using a **script/liner** brush you need to a make a puddle of milky paint, add water to the paint and mix it until it is the consistency of milk. Load the brush, and roll it pulling it towards you to keep a fine point, for long lines you roll the brush as you paint, stop and lift it off to load it again. To **dry brush**, dip the end of the bristles in paint and brush most of it off on paper towel, then apply it to the area brushing lightly.

Always clean your brushes well after each use, insure that you get the paint out from the top of the bristles, as this is where the hairs will start breaking off if they are left dirty;



Rhoda

WOOD BURNERS

There are many different types of wood burners in the market place today.

A good place to start is with a craft type wood burner. These do not have a heat control and burn quite dark, you really have to control the pressure on the pen.

I started with one of these burners and am very glad that I did. I believe it is the place to start, then if you find that you enjoy wood burning you can do some research and purchase a heat controlled unit.

I have had a couple of heat controlled units and am presently using an Optima which I love. I have the replaceable pens and various tips.

I encourage you to research and find the unit for you.** If you do not have a wood burner you may complete the projects that call for a wood burner using a Faber-Castell artist pens or a water-proof sharpie.

MINI JIG SAWS

Like most tools there are many styles of mini jig saws on the market.

I have two and use them for different thickness of gourds and different types of cuts. I never did have any success cutting by hand.

For real thick gourds you want a heavy duty jig saw that can handle the cut.

Again, do some research and find the one that suits you. Make a start cut using a sharp object, insert your blade into the cut then turn on the jigsaw.

Move the gourd towards the blade, rather than pushing the saw. Pushing the saw only breaks blades. I hold the gourd against myself and gently 'feed' it towards the blade.

Suppliers of various tools can be found on our Resource page at the end of this book.

We hope that you have found the prepping information useful. You may contact either of us through our websites, which are listed in the front of this book.

and Now it is time to PLAY!