

2016

Cambium



Hugh's shed



Dec

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Meetings & Events

6 Dec Toys for Xmas & Christmas Party

6 -24 Dec The Odlins Cash & Carry

2017

7 Feb Wood bending explained, Jim Armstrong

18 & 25 Feb Plane making workshops, at the MENZ Shed

7 Mar Picture frame making

1 Apr Glen Lucas demo at the Manawatu Club

Our Local Trees - Alder

We all use bits of wood be they common or exotic; and it seems worthwhile to remind ourselves where our source material comes from. Hence we asked Eric Cairns, your local green wood worker, farm forester and tree hugger, to volunteer a few articles about local and less common trees; their timber and possible end uses.

For the featured tree, this issue, we start with A for Alder.

Alders are in the family Betulaceae (along with birches) and are largely deciduous trees. They are more common in the northern hemisphere, but their range also extends into South America. They are preferred for use in horticultural shelter belts in New Zealand, as the roots are relatively non-invasive and also fix nitrogen, with the aid of the Frankia bacteria found in the root nodules. They are also common stream side and as well as amenity trees, so are often found in suburbia. They are capable of colonising mineral soils (sand, scree, slip faces etc.) so have been investigated by the former National Water and Soil Conservation Authority (Aokautere) for their usefulness in soil conservation.

Common alder species in NZ are the black alder (*A glutinosa*), Grey Alder (*A incana*), Italian Alder (*A cordata*), and Red Alder (*A rubra*). Appletons Tree Nursery from time to time list a few other species including Andean (*A. acuminata*), Mexican (*A jorrulensis*), Himalayan alder (*A nitida*) and a Japanese alder (*A inokume*).

There has been lukewarm interest in NZ to grow alders for timber, as this could be regarded as just another species to compete with radiata pine or perhaps cypress in the market place. I suspect that the largest alder species, for potential timber production, would be selected strains of *rubra*, *acuminata* or *nitida*. The most ornamental Alder with largest catkins that I have come across, is a Japanese species *A. inokume*.

Perhaps three of the most well-known traditional uses of alder wood are for clog making, gun powder and wharf piles. Alder is very resistant to decay under water and was used for water pipes, pumps, troughs, small boats and piles under bridges and houses. In fact, much of Venice is/was built on alder piles. Clogs made from alder wood were light, easy

to wear and absorbed shocks well. I understood that the black alder resource near Hanmer Springs was once considered for use in charcoal making and hence gunpowder.



Alnus inokume, cones upper left

Alnus rubra, last year's cones

My own experience with use of alder wood is mostly with some of the South American strains of *A acuminata*. Whilst pale when first cut, it turns an attractive brown on oxidation. It is low density, so not much use for chair-making, but was good for carving or kitchen utensils such as spoons, spatulas and rolling pins. The lightly spalted timber did have attractive markings, but the grain and figure is generally unremarkable. The density and colouration may



Nitrogen fixing nodes, Alder *acuminata*

vary slightly between species, or even between provenances, so perhaps red alder, which is said to grow up to 30m tall, might have timber more suited to furniture making.

In the North Island, our local Puriri moth can severely attack alders, ring barking them, and causing central leader dies back. If you wanted clear lengths of knot free wood, you might have to prune them up and deal with the annual influx of puriri moth attack. (Cruise your plantation with aerosol fly spray in your jacket pocket). For small wood lots, alders could be a useful species, either for coping with wet soils, or as a nurse crop (companion crop) for more valuable species, thus providing significant amounts of soil nitrogen. They are fairly fast growing, and the various species can cope with wet or dry soils. The flowers (male catkins anyway) are showy in late winter, but do not normally attract bees. However, the cicadas feed on the sap in late summer, and the bees (and wasps) will work the resultant honey dew.



Alder used for kitchen spatulas



Puriri moth damage

Auckland Symposium 2016

We asked some of our members who attended the event, for their impressions.

King's College was a step up from the previous school in every respect. The only down side seemed to be the bell tolling every 15 minutes all through the night. But it is not really the school that makes the symposium but the attendees and the demonstrators; who were all confident and competent. A small issue is that the demonstrators show us lovely dyes to use and say "Oh you can't get these in NZ". This does make for an interesting challenge.

I was very taken with a demonstrator using dying techniques where the dye was dissolved in acetone and then applied from the inside. This has opened my eyes to all sorts of ideas and tests that need to be done on different woods with different dye mediums that are available to us.

With such wide range of demonstration to choose it was nearly too varied, but that also meant that there must have been something that you really needed



to see and learn from. I think that the demonstrators did a good job of imparting knowledge.

There was also a strong contingent of wood working shops with goods for sale. My work shop will have to expand to fit some of these things. I can only recommend this as a learning experience, and that if you can't get to Auckland then at least support or local demonstration days.

Peter W *We hope to get a copy of the comprehensive brochure from the event for our library.*

<http://naw.org.nz/gallery> does show the Hawkes Bay collaboration work, maybe the work from this will be up there soon

An Insider's Report- Auckland 2016

One of the difficulties with attending symposia such as those organised by the South Auckland Woodworkers Guild is that there is just so much to see and learn. This year there were 20 demonstrators, 3 from New Zealand and 17 from overseas, each doing 5 demonstrations of 1½ hours duration, in two and a half days. So it is impossible to see everybody, showing off their skills. A lengthy selection process is usually called for and even then, there will be rueful moments re missed opportunities.

As a newby demonstrator at this level I will admit to some abiding apprehension. I make bowls and platters in the main, I do not do multi centred art pieces the creation of which require death defying acts with exotic tools on the lathe. I do not do pieces that require 200 hours of intense

concentration and if the wind blows the wrong way a potential \$7500 or more is threatened. So when Terry Scott asked me to demonstrate my first response was "Aahmmm – demonstrate what? He suggested bowls



with Tapa cloth patterned rims, and mentioned that my 'Rock Pool' bowls were different and they hadn't been seen by many in Auckland so that's what I did. So as you know I had practice demos on Saturday mornings, I had to turn 3 blanks to create one piece and lessen the need for sanding and I had to be sure that I had everything I needed to turn, finish and decorate to a high standard. You will not be surprised to learn that I created many lists and one of the advantages we from NZ had on the overseas visitors was we could take as much pre-prepared wood and tools as we liked (and that included my compressor and spray guns) and several 'just in case' items.

On Friday morning, the first day of demonstrations, I was free for the first session, so had time to watch the demonstrator I shared the demo room with, Andi Woolf, a world renowned wood-turner and a Botany Professor to boot. She does a lot of carving to her pieces, designs usually based on plant shapes, leaf patterns for example, and things botanical that she has seen through her microscope. It was a pleasure and



a privilege to be able to spend so much time in her company.

At the end of that first session I had a few minutes to get my gear all set up and then I waited for the enthusiasts to flow in. At starting time I had one and 10 minutes later when I decided that I had better begin to earn my keep I had 5. In fact it turned out to be a very enjoyable session – they had a lot more of my time and the interaction between us was great. The positive vibes I had at the end helped enable me to enjoy the rest of the weekend.

The other features that ensured a very enjoyable Symposium were the fact that there were 12 of us from Wellington and at mealtimes and at coffee breaks there was a lot of sharing of information about what had been seen. Secondly the facilities were superb – Kings College buildings and ground were first class as was the food and the wine that accompanied the evening meal. Another positive is that you make new friends who will likely be there when you attend your next Symposium or, for example, when you attend the Manawatu day next May.

But above all Symposia like this one in Auckland, or Turnfest in Brisbane, give you an opportunity to LEARN and one thing is for sure, there is always something else to learn – new techniques, new tools to use, new ideas and new technology. Some of these things are fairly simple, I managed to persuade a number of attendees that turning outboard has many advantages and very few disadvantages and that moving your body behind the cut makes a lot of sense because I was able to demonstrate those advantages.

Am I trying to persuade more of you to attend the next Auckland Symposium – YES I AM! I am aware that this sort of learning comes at a significant monetary cost but I still think that it is money very well spent and your woodturning will be substantially improved as a result. The Auckland Symposium cannot continue in its present form unless attendance numbers are increased so start thinking about you being there in two years time.

And finally, while I am still thinking about LEARNING, Glen Lucas is a highly sought after turner and demonstrator and the fact that he is coming here to demonstrate is really something to look forward to. So

check your 2017 calendars !!!! HDM

Plane Making Principles

As a little introduction to the plane making sessions in February; just as a taster, we asked John for his approach to plane making. You may have in mind to make a utilitarian tool ... so if you have not seen John's expressive items, you may want to consider expanding your horizons.

I have been interested in making and using wooden planes for at least 30 years. James Krenov and his ideas very strong source of inspiration and I became an avid follower. It seemed logical that wooden planes must be capable of undertaking high quality work as all of the great architecture and furniture of the 2000 years prior to 1850 were made with them. I still use the old coffin planes alongside those I have made. My range, made using Krenov's construction principles, includes smoothers (both regular and

high angle), jointers, block, rebate, shoulder carriage makers and scraping planes.

I am currently building a proto type of a kerfing plane. In every case a piece of hard-ish wood is selected

- Oak, Maire, Matai, Walnut, Jarrah etc are all suitable. Softer wood such as Rimu, Mahogany and Kauri can be used but they need an added hard wood sole to withstand the wear of use. Good quality blades, such as those found on older planes in junk shops,



are perfect and sharpen well provided there is not too much rust pitting. The wood is cut into a middle piece, that is the same width as the blade, and two narrow sides. All faces need to be planed flat to get perfectly matching joins when glued back together. The throat is cut out of the centre piece at 45 -60 degrees on the back face and whatever gives good shavings clearance on the front. I generally cut a pin to go across the throat and a wedge to hold the blade in position. Everything is then glued into place. The tricky bit is tuning the unfinished plane to get it cutting perfectly. The sole must be absolutely flat, the throat clearance at the sharp edge of the blade a millimetre or less and the face supporting the back of the blade must conform exactly to the shape of the blade. Anything less will result in an inefficient cutting action. Typically blade chatter or jamming of the flow of the shavings. None of these adjustments are hard to do. They just require patience and observation. The fun part begins after this with the shaping of the body to fit the owners hands. Krenov liked his plane simple with a roughly finished look. I like curvy shapes with carving added. Its entirely a matter of personal preference.

A well tuned self made plane can be made to cut as well as the finest tools money can buy. The Committee has asked me to hold two hands-on morning sessions early next



year on plane making. All are welcome and you will go away with a fine plane to grace your workshop. If you are thinking of participating bring along some suitably sized hardwood. Narrow pieces will need to be laminated together before the workshops start. Also bring a blade, with or without the cap iron (its not essential). You may have an old blade at home (I have plenty that I can sell for \$5 each) and the second hand tool shop in Tocker Street, Taita has some. *John Spittal*

Sharpening Larger Chisels

This is not quite a tip more of an observation. Surely many of us have grappled with the not too easy task of trying to use a honing gauge to sharpen a large chisel; such as a 50 mm skew. The Green wood-workers to do seem to have such larger ones in their tool kit.

At our recent Guild meeting Brian showed us his appropriately beefy honing jig. He uses the magnetic gauge to measure the honing angle. Could a reciprocating motor be attached to make it almost labour free ?



Denis's Tip

Sharp tools are a must for turning - so dress your grindstone with a diamond dresser to rid the stone of imbedded steel and to finish with a flat face on the stone.

Also ...

You may well have (perhaps buried in a drawer) a tapered metalwork reamer. The taper angle is usually the same as a gouge or file tang - so after drilling stepped holes when making a handle, a little clean out with the reamer gives a snug fit when fitting the tool piece.

And

We touched on the subject of keeping tools free from rust if they are not used frequently. CRC and the likes, do tend to evaporate over time. One recent good discovery is Lanox (a Lanolin derivative). This seems to last, also helps clean metal surfaces, is not a mined hydrocarbon, and smells like a wooly sweater.

Guild Contacts

SUB-GROUPS

CARVERS - Coordinator: Sam Hillis, 529 7105
Meeting at Naenae Mens' Shed - (3rd Tuesday 7-9pm)
HUTT TURNERS - Coordinator: Denis Newton 977 5650
Meet Naenae Mens' Shed, 1st Saturday after Guild meeting 10am –12 noon
GREEN WOODWORKERS - Coordinator: Eric Cairns 526 7929
FURNITURE GROUP - Coordinator: Lew Skinner (2nd Tuesday Ev.)475 7613

*Remember that these groups are for you and are open to anyone in the Guild.
They provide you with an opportunity for more fellowship and a chance to
further develop the skills that you already possess.*

Guild Committee

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