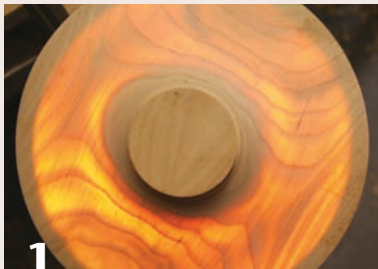


Autumn Flowers

Patricia Spero and Gabor Lacko

Red and yellow chrysanthemums and the changing colors of leaves in the fall inspired this design of fallen leaves on a large platter, made from maple, surrounding three chrysanthemums. The chrysanthemums are made up of three concentric thin-turned bowls and a domed center disc. The largest bowl is about 5" (13 cm) in diameter, the next smaller one is about 4" (10 cm) in diameter, and the smallest is just less than 2" (5 cm) in diameter. The disc, made to fit into the smallest bowl, represents the stamens. ▶





1
Aim for an overall thickness of about $\frac{1}{16}$ " (1.6 mm). Check for uniform thickness by shining a light through the wood.



2
These three small bowls will form the flower.

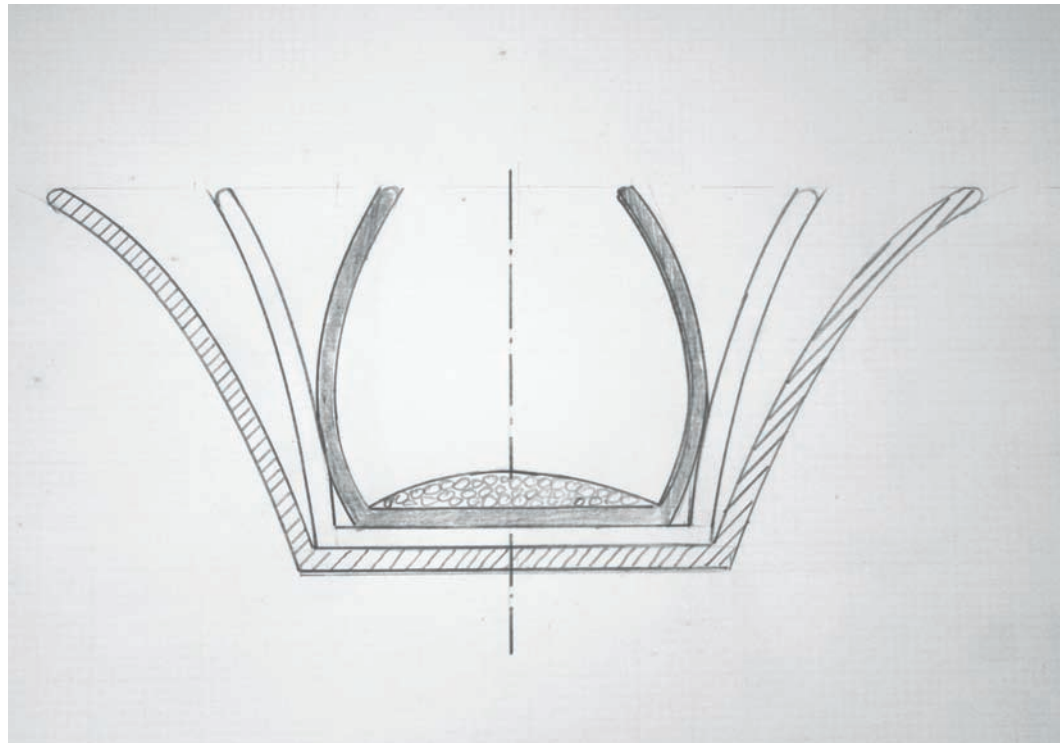


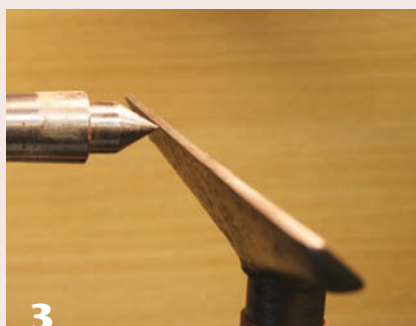
Figure 1. A sketch of the construction of the flower with the smallest bowl in the center shows how the bowls and the center dome touch and nest.

To create the flowers, three turned bowls are divided into petals and the petals are then shaped and formed. The underside of the petals is stippled, both sides are colored and varnished, and then the four components are assembled into one flower.

Turn the bowls

The shape of the three little bowls, which will be converted into three sets of petals, is shown in the sketch (Figure 1). The bowls need to be approximately $\frac{1}{16}$ " (1.6 mm) thick. You can check the wall thickness and uniformity by shining a light through the bowl (Photo 1).

The inside diameter of the base on the largest bowl must be the same as the outside diameter of the base on the center bowl. The smallest bowl has an inwardly curved side. It touches the second bowl at its maximum diameter and not at the base. On all three bowls, you need to form a spigot, which will be used



3
The toolrest, used as a guide when drawing radial lines, must be exactly at center height.



4
Draw radial lines for dividing the bowl into twenty-four segments for the petals.



5
A jig will safely hold the two larger bowls for cutting the radial lines. Note the stop clamped at the back of the bandsaw table.

to hollow out the inside, to hold the finished bowl onto the lathe while indexing, and for holding the delicate bowls during the processes that follow.

The best wood to use is maple—it takes a good color, stipples evenly, and holds up to boiling and shaping.

Turn the three little bowls, checking the wall thickness periodically and sand them to a good finish (*Photo 2*). The finish on the outside of the bowl is not critical because that area will be stippled. However the finish on the inside is important because it will be colored and varnished and every scratch and sanding mark on the wood will be visible under the color.

There is one additional small item to be turned, the domed disc. The disc must fit neatly into the center of the smallest bowl, just covering the bottom.

Form the petals

The two larger bowls are divided into twenty-four equal parts (15° each). The easiest way to do this is using the indexing on the lathe. It is imperative that all lines point at the center point of the bowl. The toolrest, which is your guide when you draw the radial lines, must be exactly at center height (*Photo 3*).

With the bowl mounted by its spigot into a four-jaw chuck, index around the bowl, marking the twenty-four divisions. (The smallest bowl will have only twelve divisions.) At every division, draw a line on the outside of the bowl using the toolrest as a guide (*Photo 4*).

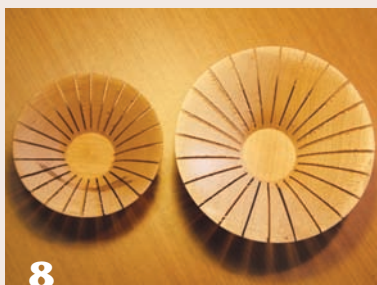
Using a bandsaw, cut along each line from the edge of the bowl to the edge of the base. To make sure that these cuts are straight, make a simple jig for each bowl. Each jig consists of a square piece of wood, about ¾" (20 mm) thick with a recess for the bowl (*Photo 5*).



6 With the bowl held in a jig, cut along each radial line. Note the stop clamped onto the bandsaw table, behind the jig.



7 For safety, cut the twelve radial lines in the smallest bowl using a handsaw.



8 The bowls are ready for sanding between the radial cuts.

Using the parallel guide (fence) of the bandsaw, position the jig on the table in such a way that when pushed toward the blade, the saw will cut exactly through the center of the jig. Note how far you have to push the jig to finish the cut and set the end stop at this point. If your bandsaw does not have an end stop, clamp a piece of wood to the table at the correct place. Position the bowl in the recess with one of the pencil lines facing the saw line and make a cut (*Photo 6*).



9 Sand and shape the petals using a belt sander.



10 The largest bowl is sanded and the petals are formed.



11 The petals are now ready for bending into shape.

Stop the bandsaw, carefully pull the jig back, turn the bowl in the jig, and position the next line to make the cut. Cut all twenty-four lines on the two larger bowls. For the smallest bowl with twelve lines, use a handsaw for safety (*Photo 7*). The bowls now are ready for sanding and shaping (*Photo 8*).

Sand and shape the petals

Sand and shape the petals using a 180-grit, 1"- (25 mm-) wide belt sander. Shaping the petals is easier if you draw ▶



12

Heat the two larger bowls in boiling water for two to three minutes until the wood is soft.



13

Manipulate the wet petals into shape. Use folded paper towels between the petals.



14

The flower is ready for decorating or it can be left as is for a natural-wood look.

the shape of the tip on each petal before sanding. Carefully sand between the petals to smooth the saw cuts and to shape the petals (*Photos 9, 10*). The petals on all three bowls are now ready for bending into position (*Photo 11*).

Bend the petals

First heat the two larger bowls in boiling water for two to three minutes, until the wood is soft (*Photo 12*). Remove one bowl from the water, and force the wet petals into shape by manipulating them using folded paper towel. Push some petals up and some down. Be careful not to break the petals (*Photo 13*).

Microwave each bowl for one minute. Let it cool for five minutes and then microwave it again for one minute. (Microwaving times may vary, depending on the power of your microwave.)

Leave the smallest bowl in its original shape.

The flower is now ready for decorating, although if you prefer a natural-wood look, then proceed to removing the spigot and attach the three bowls together (*Photo 14*).

Decorate the flower

Stipple the underside of the petals of all three parts and the center dome using

a round-headed burr (*Photos 15, 16*). Then, airbrush the three individual sets of petals using transparent paints in your chosen colors. Use at least three colors to make the shading (*Photo 17*).

When the paint is dry, apply several coats of varnish, letting each coat dry for at least twenty minutes before applying the next. Sand each petal with fine abrasive or steel wool to





15
Stipple the underside of the petals.



16
The underside of the largest flower is completely stippled and ready for airbrush coloring.



17
Airbrush the three individual flower-petal bowls using transparent paints.



18
Position and glue together the four parts of the flower.

smooth the finish before applying the last coat.

Spray the center disc, either with yellow airbrush paint or black ebonizing paint, and then varnish. Remove the spigot and glue together.

After all operations are finished (turning, sanding, bending, stippling, and coloring), remove the spigots from the three bowls. We sometimes remove the spigots earlier (as shown in the photos), but the bowls are delicate and difficult to hold; leaving the spigots intact can make the finishing processes less complicated. The spigots from the two larger bowls can be removed by sanding them away using

a 120-grit sanding disc. For the spigot on the small bowl, remove the spigot using a sharp chisel.

Position and glue together the three bowls and the domed middle, using a thick adhesive such as epoxy (*Photo 18*).

Make the leaves

Using a real leaf as a template, draw its shape onto a sheet of 1/16"- (1.6 mm-) thick veneer. Position the leaf along the grain to allow it to form itself into the final shape (*Photo 19*). Draw the veins and cut out the leaf shape using a fine cutter (*Photo 20*). Do not worry about sanding. Cut out the leaf (*Photo 21*).

Heat the leaf in boiling water until the wood is soft. To achieve the final shape, microwave it for a minute to make it curl.

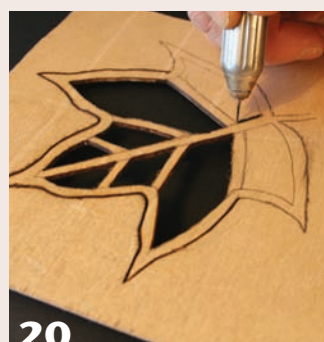
Stipple both sides of the leaf and the edges with a ball-tip burr, airbrush with your chosen colors, and varnish. Make two more leaves and place them with a flower (*Photo 22*).

There are many ways to display the flowers and leaves. Let your imagination be your inspiration. ■

Patricia Spero and Gabor Lacko are woodturners who live in England. They have worked together for five years. Patricia plays the harp professionally and Gabor comes from an engineering background. Their work is primarily turned, pierced, carved, colored, and inlaid.



19
Use a real leaf to draw the shape onto the veneer.



20
Draw the veins and cut out the shape of the leaf.



21
The cut out leaf is ready for boiling, curling, and airbrushing.



22
The four parts of the flower are glued together and the leaves are in place.