

Garden Mushrooms

1. Wood selection: I prefer green wood since it is easier to turn and often shows excellent grain and color contrasts. To guard against checking after turning I usually turn side grain as opposed to end grain turning.

2. Cutting blanks: Round out your blanks on the band saw or rough out with a chain saw. Orient the blanks on the lathe between centers placing the bottom of the mushroom toward the head stock. The bottom should be the bark or sapwood side of the blank and the top should be the heartwood making sure not to include the pith.

3. Turning: Begin by truing the blank then turn a tendon on the tail stock end keeping in mind the desired shape of the mushroom and removing enough wood to determine your final design. Remove the piece from the lathe and mount in a chuck. Take care that it does not have too much run out as the next step will compound the problems when finishing the piece.

Take a forstner bit large enough that your chuck can expand in the hole and drill into the bottom of the piece. After drilling turn away enough wood that the hole is above the bottom rim and faced off level.

Remove from the chuck and reverse using the expansion mode of the chuck to fasten the piece for turning. Now finish the piece, turning off the tendon and refining the shape to your liking. Power sand and remove from the lathe.

4. Turning stem: I use a pressure treated 4X4 for most stems they are easy to turn and resist rot when used next to the ground. Cut to desired lengths using a chop saw or any other method making sure the cut is square. Turn between centers keeping the top toward the head stock. Use calipers to determine the size that will fit into the hole and taper it a bit so it fits snugly. Remove the live center from the tail stock and replace with a drill chuck and drill a hole about 3 inches deep using a bit that will accommodate a large galvanized nail from Home Depot (45 Cents each) cut the heads off and insert.

Glue stems into mushroom caps using appropriate weather proof glue.(I use any polyurethane like Gorilla glue.

5. Finishing: If the wood is real wet I bag for a few days until most of the moisture is gone. Then I use a good deck sealer, or linseed oil and thinner mixed. After a few coats have soaked in I finish with a final coat of Thompsons Water seal and you are good to go.

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