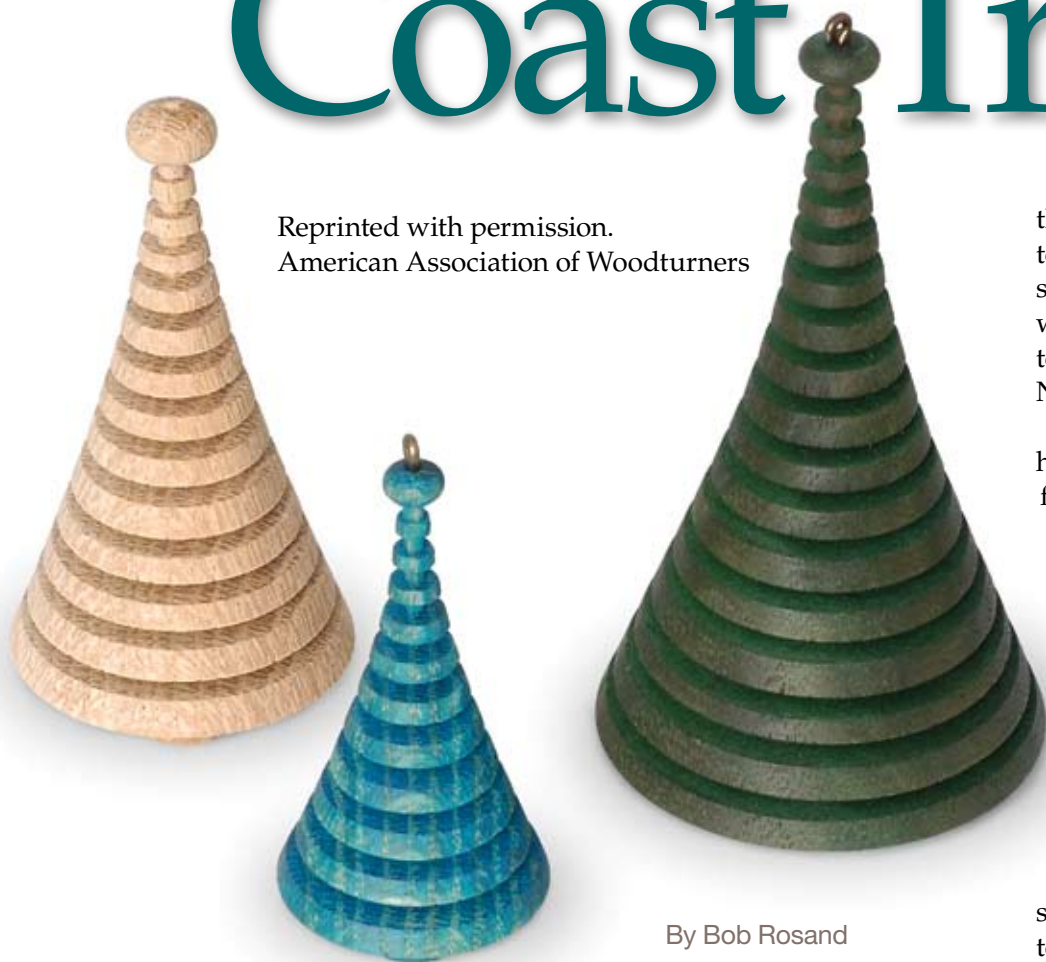


North Coast Tree



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American Association of Woodturners

the thin-walled $\frac{1}{16}$ " parting tool is ideal because the flutes slice through the wood. Many woodturning catalogs show this tool, which is often attributed to Nick Cook.

You can turn this tree to any height. I've made them anywhere from 2" tall to about 8–9" tall. A good size blank to start with is about 2×2×5".

Turn your tree

With your center finder, locate the center of each end of your blank, and place it between the centers of your lathe. Use the spindle roughing gouge to true up the blank. Then switch to a $\frac{1}{2}$ " skew or parting tool to turn a tenon to hold the blank in a 4-jaw chuck.

If you don't have a chuck, fasten a waste block to a small faceplate, and glue the tree stock to that. The end result will be the same; it's just a bit more time consuming.

With the tree blank held firmly in a 4-jaw scroll chuck, bring up the tail center for safety. Then shape the tree with a spindle roughing gouge. The top of the tree should be toward the tailstock and the bottom of the tree toward the headstock. The spindle roughing gouge is ideal for roughing stock, but used properly,

By Bob Rosand

Several years ago when I demonstrated for the North Coast Woodturners chapter in Ohio, I stayed at the home of George and Pat Raeder. While there, George presented me with his version of a turned Christmas tree. I saw a lot of beauty in this simple, yet intriguing, design.

George's tree hung in my shop until the date for our holiday open house approached. As usual, I was looking for that elusive easy-to-turn, inexpensive, fast-selling item as an ornament or bobble for a

wrapped gift. George's Christmas tree filled the bill perfectly!

You can make these trees either free-standing or as ornaments with screw eyes.

Get started

To complete this project, you will need a $\frac{1}{2}$ " or $\frac{3}{4}$ " spindle roughing gouge, a $\frac{3}{8}$ " spindle gouge, a standard parting tool, a $\frac{1}{2}$ " skew (optional), and a thin parting tool. The standard parting tool tends to tear the wood fibers a bit. For the clean and fine cuts required,



it is also a good tool for making long, smooth curves, or in this case, Christmas trees.

When you have the shape of the tree about where you want it, use your spindle gouge to turn a small finial (about $\frac{1}{2}$ " or $\frac{3}{8}$ ") on what will be the top of the tree (**Photo 1**). If you are going to make a hanging ornament out of this tree, now is a good time to pull back the tailstock and drill a $\frac{1}{16}$ " or smaller hole in the top of the tree/finial so that you can later insert a screw eye. Once completed, bring up the tailstock again.

Resharpen your spindle roughing gouge and then refine the shape of the tree. For this task, I have good results using the tool on its side. If you look at the gouge from its front, the spindle roughing gouge has two flat edges. (I find these to be the most useful for long, smooth curves.) Sand lightly with 120-grit or 150-grit sandpaper.

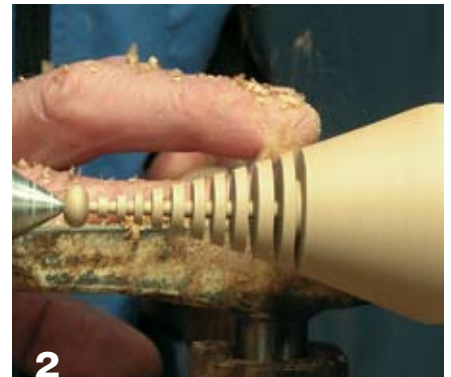
Get in the groove

Now the fun part—cutting the grooves (branch rings) into the tree. Make your first parting cut at the base of the finial (top of the tree) and leave a tree trunk of about $\frac{1}{8}$ " diameter.

Make further cuts until you approach the base of the ornament (**Photo 2**). The trick is consistency.



1 Use a spindle roughing gouge on its side to refine the shape of the finial.



2 Cut the branch rings with a thin parting tool and leave a $\frac{1}{8}$ "-diameter tree trunk.



3 Create a stand for the tree and part the ornament from the chuck.

Each branch ring should be the same thickness as the previous one, and the trunk of the tree should be consistent. Light sanding is appropriate. But be careful, as the tree is delicate.

With a standard parting tool, form the base of the tree stand and then part from the lathe (**Photo 3**). Insert a #214½ brass screw eye or snipped-off fish hook into the finial and your tree is nearly done.

Color options

The wood's natural look is fine as is, but I look for variations on a theme. One option is to stir up colored dyes and soak the trees in them. I've had good results with Arti Toymaker's and TransFast dyes, available in powder form from most woodworking catalogs. When dry, spray the trees with lacquer and lightly buff.

George pointed out to me that you could sand some of the dye from the outside of the tree, leaving the inner surface darker.

Have fun making your trees, and let me know if you come up with any great variations.

Bob Rosand (RRosand.com) is an *American Woodturner* contributing editor. He lives in Bloomsburg, PA.