

What's Your Poison?

The subject of dust as a hazard to woodturners has often been discussed but are you aware of other health issues that your hobby could initiate? Timber of any species can cause a reaction in some people just as any substance may produce a fatal reaction in one person yet have no effect on another.

In most species the dust is the primary danger but in some, the bark or leaves may contain toxins whilst others have them within the timber itself. These chemicals are often produced as a defense against pests and diseases. Whether coming into direct contact with skin or inhaled, they can cause unpleasant reactions with immediate or delayed symptoms.

These chemicals generally fall into four groups: irritants, sensitizers, toxins and carcinogens.

Irritants generally take affect immediately with skin rashes, coughing and sneezing as symptoms

Sensitizers cause allergic reactions, building up over time with continued exposure and not necessarily apparent initially.

Toxins are just that, poisons found in some woods.

Carcinogens can cause cancers after long term exposure, particularly dust.

Exotic timbers such as rosewood and related species are particular culprits but native woods can be just as harmful to some individuals. I think most of us are aware that all parts of the yew tree except the red flesh around the seed, are poisonous. Some Prunus species should also be treated with caution, particularly laurels.

Some years ago, I was asked if I could turn a pair of wooden lampshades from some cherry.

The timber in question was about 10" in diameter and recently felled, so full of sap. I enjoy working with cherry and as the lampshades needed to be thin, the green wood was ideal.

During the turning process I noticed a lovely smell of almond adding to the pleasure of time spent at the lathe. I was however, curious as this was cherry not almond, although both belong to the same family, Prunus. Being me, I had to do some research. If you are an Agatha Christie fan maybe you can guess my findings! The lovely almond smell was in fact hydrogen cyanide!

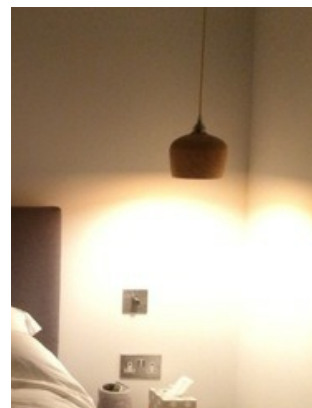
It seems all Prunus species contain cyanide glycosides stored in vacuoles. When the vacuoles are ruptured the molecules break down and hydrogen cyanide is released. Wilted material poses the highest risk and dried, the least.



In the book Wood for Woodturners by Mark Baker, possible health risks are given for all species listed. For further reference see also <https://www.wood-database.com/wood-articles/wood-allergies-and-toxicity/>

Please do not be put off turning the wonderful selection of timbers available but just be aware of potential problems and take sensible precautions. I still enjoy turning Cherry!

Left and right, Hanging bedside reading lights with the turned cherry lamp shades.



Members' Work

I am pleased to report that members are still keeping busy with their turning and also other projects.



Gareth Garner's March competition entry began as a vase but his wife thought it would make a good lamp so he made a top and drilled cable holes resulting in the lamp.

Left, the vase almost completed. Right, transformed into the lamp.



Jayne Brown decided to give microwaving a go after reading the February newsletter. She used a piece of cherry. In Jayne's words "I rough turned it then microwaved, then had to go back and do the final turning as it had changed shape. When I microwaved it I did it over about 4/5 days. Just every time I passed the microwave did 35 seconds. In that time it lost about 100 gms in weight."

Jayne's microwaved 8"cherry bowl



Mike Moon has made himself a chuck for reversing work to finish, similar to the Longworth chuck. Made from 18mm ply it will accommodate work from 4½" to 9¾".



Easter bunnies and Figure with dog by Lynn Chambers.



Richard Hasleden has made this beautiful pagoda from Cherry, Ebony, Mopane and Sycamore. It stands 18"high by 8"wide



Left, Mike Pollard has made a lovely dovecote and now has requests for several more.

Right, I have been repairing this 6ft. long old oak settle. The frame was broken and there was no seat. Sandra Day.



March Competition Results

The winning entry in last month's competition was 2N by Jayne Brown. Congratulations Jayne.

Other entries were as follows 1N, Gareth Garner; 3N, Mike Moon; 4I, Paul Filsell; 5A, Pete Hawes; 6A, Richard Hasleden.

Some clever entries, well done everyone. Thank you to judge Mike Pollard.



April Competition Entries



1N 8" spalted beech lipped platter



2N, Tricylinder bedside clock with rust effect finish.



4I, Plantstand from Mahogany, Oak and Sapele 2ft tall



5I, Spalted beech stool 510mm high.



6A, Knitter 7" tall seated.



3I, Candlestick with graduated captive rings in lime.



7A, Daffodils in a magnolia bud vase 13" tall overall



Chairman	Maggie Wright
Vice Chairman and Competition Secretary	Peter Castle
Secretary	Anne Smith
Treasurer	John Turner
Events organiser	Greg Collett
Librarian	David Spice
Newsletter editor	Sandra Day
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May Newsletter

The next newsletter will be published on May 9th

All content to be received by Tuesday May 4th