

The Rocky Mountain Woodturners Wood Bank

John I. Giem
January 25, 2021

The RMWT Wood Bank is designed to provide a source of wood suitable for woodturning for the members of the club. It is operated by volunteers to find, collect, store and distribute wood to the membership.

Note: You do not need to own or operate a chainsaw to utilize or help with the Wood Bank.

Background:

When I, John Giem, first started doing woodturning, one of my biggest challenges was finding wood suitable for the projects I wanted to make. I took some turning lessons from Cindy Drozda and soon learned about and joined the RMWT. As I got involved with the club, I worked with the Board to setup the Wood Bank. As it turned out, I was one of the few people in the club that had adequate space to accommodate it and was still close enough to be accessible to the membership. So, I have hosted the Wood Bank on my property in South West Fort Collins for the benefit of the members.

It turns out that we had a lot to learn about how to make the Wood Bank efficient, successful, and friendly. Jerry Sherman was a big help with the collection of the available wood. When Drew Nickols was president, he asked Jerry to cut turning blanks and bring them to the monthly meetings. This developed into the regular wood blank raffles at our meetings. Over time, we recruited other members to come to the Wood Bank, cut the blanks, take them to the meetings and hold the raffles. Initially, the proceeds were used to help fund the purchase of items for the library.

Staffing:

All of the activities to support the Wood Bank is performed by volunteers. One of the benefits is that the wood is distributed on a first come first served basis. So, those that are cutting and harvesting the wood are naturally there first so...

Wood Bank Manager/Chairman: John Giem: Supervises/coordinates the collection, storage, and distribution of the wood within the Wood Bank. Responsible for keeping the Wood Bank clean and organized for efficiency and safety.

Wood Collection Lead: open position (was Jerry Sherman): Coordinates the collection of wood and delivery of it to the Wood Bank. Facilitates the storage of the wood in a neat and safe fashion. The actual collection of the wood will be done by RMWT members using their vehicles and trailers. John Giem has a trailer equipped with a winch that is useful in this manner. Other club members also have access to pickups and trailers.

Sourcing wood: All members of the RMWT should be watching for opportunities for wood for the Wood Bank. The RMWT will not cut down trees due to safety issues, but will cut up and haul away the wood from a tree that is already been cut down. Potential wood sources include: neighbors or friends that are cutting down or trimming trees, construction site where trees are being removed, Tree Surgeons, city foresters, etc. Any place where trees are being removed has a potential for sourcing turning wood. Keep your eyes open and watch for opportunities. We have learned that trees that have been cut down and

laying on the ground for an extended time have often deteriorated too much to be useful to us. In those cases, we need to be more careful. We have enough firewood without hauling in more.

Monthly wood raffle at meeting: We currently have two members that cut turning blanks monthly and another member that transports the wood to the meeting and does the raffling. After the pandemic, we will need to verify that they will continue in those rolls or find replacements.

Distribution of wood: In addition to the monthly raffle, members can go to the Wood Bank to get turning wood, firewood and compost. Generally, the wood in the Bank is in log form, it keeps better that way. Over time, if the wood is not utilized, it will dry out and crack thus turning itself into firewood. The sawdust from cutting the wood is collected and piled up and allowed to compost. We do our best to keep Walnut out of the compost since it is a natural herbicide thus not good for our plants. If you have a chainsaw, you are welcome to cut your own turning blanks from the available wood. You will be required to wear safety equipment when using the chain saw. If you do not have your own, the club has helmets with face shields and chaps for your usage. You will be monitored for your chainsaw usage. If you have questions, ask.

Safety: You will be expected to follow safe procedures whenever you are involved with any of the Wood Bank activities. We will watch each other to keep everyone safe. There is a lot of information available on chainsaw safety, look it up and read it. If in doubt, ask for advice. (Ask John.)

Guidelines for collecting and cutting for the Wood Bank:

1. Length, in General, cut the logs long but keep them safe for you to handle and transport. As the logs age in the wood lot, they will lose moisture and start to split. The ends of the logs will show splitting first. When we harvest turning blanks, we can cut off the splits on the ends putting them into the firewood pile. Splitting can be minimized by coating the fresh cut ends with wood sealer or paint. (Do you have unused paint left over?) When cutting turning blanks, we can often cut around the splits and still get good useable ones.

When using my trailer with the winch, I have safely hauled logs nine and a half feet long.

2. Size, in most cases, we want the logs to be eight inches in diameter or larger. This is most compatible with the needs of our members. Most of the lathes are restricted to turnings that are twelve inches or less with a few that will go much larger. The larger the diameter, the more versatile it is when cutting blanks. But large diameter logs are harder to handle. When in doubt ask.
3. Varieties of wood. This will change as wood is deposited and withdrawn. There is little interest by our members in pine. Sometimes if beetle kill pine with heavy stains are available, it moves well. Other varieties that are popular include: walnut, maple, elm, locust, linden, and some cottonwood (curly figured). Most of the woods that grow locally are well received. Other sources of interesting woods are obtained when traveling or from friends or relatives from outside of our area. Just be aware of potential bugs or diseases from other areas.
4. *Highly figured woods:* These include crotches, spalting, burls, and root balls. A **crotch** can provide highly figured reaction wood that grows in the area between the branching wood. When cutting around a potential crotch leave them relatively long, six inches or so, to allow for drying and cracking. If left long, the split wood can be cut off and the useful interior wood will remain unharmed.

Spalting is caused by bacteria invading the wood and starting the decaying process. In the ideal

case, the wood is still strong enough to be useful and the spalting creates interesting colored patterns within the wood. For more information, go to the AAW journal and do a search on spalting. There are several interesting articles available.

Root balls can yield interesting grain patterns but are difficult to obtain due to the necessity of digging them out of the ground. If the root ball is retrieved by just pulling the out with a tractor or truck, there is a high risk of damage.

Burls are highly prized due to the interesting grain patterns. They are hard to find. They usually grow above ground on the side of a tree. Experts do not seem to know what causes them. If you find some, the Wood Bank will gladly help you find them a home. Burls are not to be confused with areas on the trunk of a tree where a limb has been cut off and the healing bark grows over the cut off area leaving a lump on the side. In some cases these lumps and their knots can provide interesting turnings.

Guidelines to follow when at the RMWT Wood Bank and related activities

- If the Wood Bank Manager (John Giem) is not present, then the Wood Bank is not open for usage.
- If you are not adept or not comfortable using a chainsaw, then ask for some coaching or ask someone else to do the cutting.
- Don't be afraid to ask how to best cut the wood to get the blank.
- Safety is paramount, all chainsaw users must wear protective equipment. No tennis shoes or sandals. Helmets, face masks and chaps are required. The club has two sets that can be borrowed. You should provide your own ear protection. If in doubt, then ask.
- Blocks are available to support the wood off the ground or to prevent rolling.
- Keep the area clear of debris to minimize tripping hazards.
- DO NOT operate any chainsaw within 10 feet of another operating chainsaw.
- Before starting a cut, check and block the wood being cut to prevent unintentional movement or binding of the chainsaw.
- If you are assisting someone using a chainsaw, then stay within his vision area and keep hands and feet away from the cutting area.
- Bystanders should maintain a wide margin around running chainsaws to minimize risk of injury to themselves or others.
- At all time be aware of those around you and watch for potential safety hazards.

If you find any errors in this document or needed additions, send the information to

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