

# Introduction

I like to make different Christmas Ornaments every year to give to my relatives. This article describes the ornaments that I'm making this year. The ornaments use a split turning of either a Christmas Tree or Snowman on a background frame. The frame can be made using a ring with contrasting veneer or turned directly from solid stock.

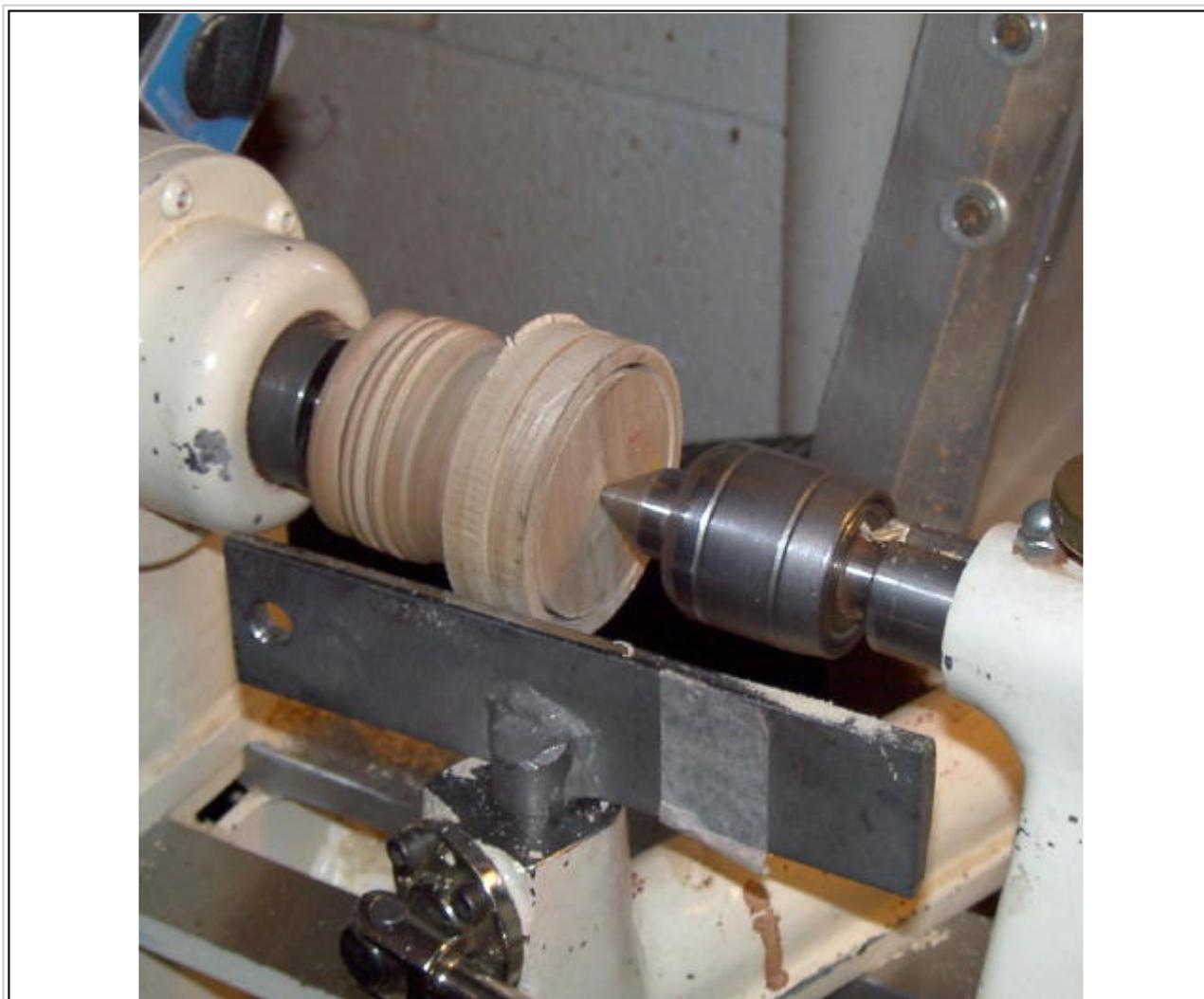


The finished ornaments.

## Making the Frame using Rings and Veneer

If you like the look of contrasting multiple woods for the ornament you should try making the frame out of a ring with a veneer backing. First mount a flat disk to use as a drive plate. You can mount a scrap piece of wood to a small face plate and turn it true and flat. To turn the rings start with a disk of solid wood about 3 inches in diameter.

Mark the center of the disk, and hold it against the drive plate with your tail stock center as shown in Figure 2. True the disk with a bowl gouge. Use a parting tool to cut rings by cutting from the face and the edge. If you start with a disk a little over 3" in diameter and  $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick and use a thin ( $\frac{1}{16}$ " ) parting tool you should be able to get 4 suitable rings from each disk. If you have some break out when cutting through the back, it's no big deal, as you can clean that up later.



A disk held against a flat drive disk for cutting loose the rings.

Cut some slightly oversize disks of veneer (I traced the ring and used scissors). Glue the rings to the veneer. It's hard to get rid of glue squeeze-out without cutting through veneer, so minimize it by spreading a thin layer of glue on the ring (I used my fingers). Clamp the rings to the veneer (I used plywood cauls and C-Clamps).

Once the glue dries mount the frame, back side out, in a Chuck (I used narrow wooden jaws on my Stronghold). Trim the veneer and smooth the back part of the rim of the ring. Don't try to turn the back of the veneer, as sanding alone will be adequate. Sand and apply a finish if you like to finish on the lathe. Reverse the frame in the chuck and true up the rest of the outside of the ring, the rim, and the inside of the ring. Again, don't try to turn the veneer face. Add a decorative cove or bead to the rim if you like. Sand and apply a finish. It's okay to apply finish to the whole frame now, as the split turning will be attached with hot-melt glue. Hot-melt will stick to finish about as well as it will to bare wood, which is not very well, of course, but Christmas Ornaments are not subject to a lot of stress. Assuming you keep the cat out of the tree.

# Turning the Frame from Solid Stock

If you would rather turn the frame from solid stock (I used some slightly spalted soft maple from my firewood pile), cut a disk about 3" in diameter and about 1/2" thick. Mount it in a chuck and true the back part of the disk and the back, sand and apply finish. Reverse the disk, true the rest of the edge, hollow the inside, then sand and finish.

## The Split Turnings

### Christmas Tree

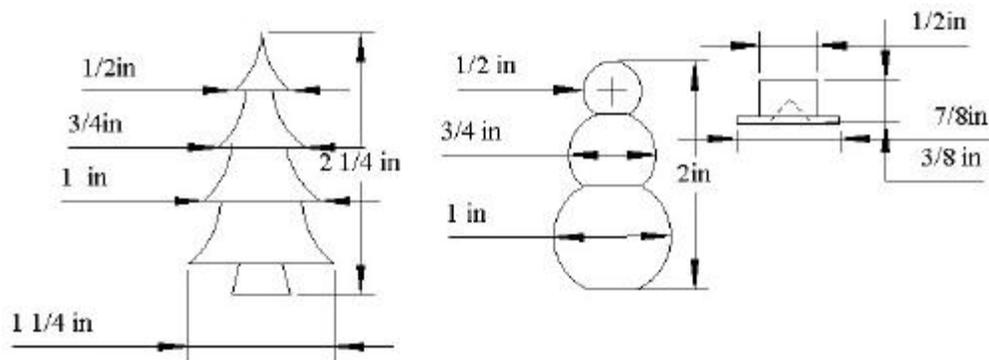
To make the split turnings first find some 3/4" thick or so dark wood (I used walnut). Rip two strips twice as wide as the wood is thick, then glue them into a turning square with a paper joint. I find this easiest to do by spreading glue in a thin coat over both pieces with a flexible piece of plastic, but you can also apply a bead of glue on one and then rub them together. Kraft paper is best for the joint, but you can use newspaper if you don't have any paper grocery bags to cut up. Clamp well and let it dry overnight.

Cut off 3" or so of the glued up square and mount it between centers. Use a cup center in your tailstock a point will split the turning. Predrill for the point of your drive center and use a cup/safety drive or make sure the prongs are aligned across the paper joint. You can turn the tree completely between centers if you wish, but I prefer the added convenience and safety of using a collet chuck, as it is most annoying if the sides separate whilst you're turning them. If you want to use a collet chuck, turn a tenon between centers, then mount it in your chuck. Follow approximately the dimensions given in Figure 3.

### Snowman

To make the body of the snowman, prepare a paper jointed turning square of light wood, such as bass wood, maple, or pine and mount it as you did for the tree. Follow the dimensions in Figure 3.

Use a darker wood for the hat. Left-overs from the tree would be ideal. Follow the dimensions in Figure 3 or turn a size to suit what your snowman's head turned out to be. Undercut the bottom of the hat so you can assemble it at a suitably rakish angle.



The dimensions I ended up with. You don't have to slavishly measure, this just gives you an idea to shoot for.

## Making the Hanger

You could turn a small finial or even just glue a loop of mono-filament or ribbon to the frame to hang the ornament, but I used brass wire this year. I made a simple bending form by drilling nail size holes in a scrap of maple, then whacking in nails and cutting them off. I left them about 1/2" above the wood, but 1/4" would have been better. To make the hanger first cut off a length of brass wire, and wind it around the nails. Tighten the hanger by twisting the base with a pair of pliers, then tamp it flat with a small scrap of wood, and remove from the bending form. Cut off the ends, leaving 1/8" or so of twisted wire. To mount it in the frame drill a hole the size the twisted wire turns out to be. Put a drop of super-glue on a piece of waxed paper or aluminum foil, then dip the hanger in the glue and screw it into the hole in the frame.



The wire bending form. I start at the bottom, going around each nail in counter-clockwise order, then twisting to tighten up.

## Assembly and Adding Accents

To finish the ornaments, first split the turnings using a chisel or knife. You don't need to remove the paper off the back. Use hot-melt glue to attach the turnings to the frame. The last step is to add accents with puff paint. I used red white and blue for the tree lights, orange for the snowman's nose, and black for his eyes, mouth, and buttons. Enjoy.