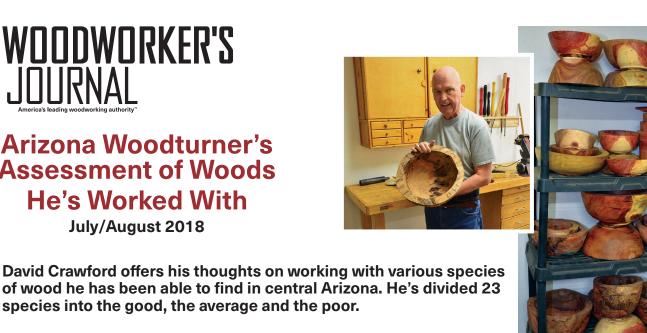


## Arizona Woodturner's **Assessment of Woods** He's Worked With

July/August 2018

species into the good, the average and the poor.



## GOOD

Indian Rosewood: Very stable; cuts easily and takes a great finish. Rarely if ever checks or cracks during the air drying process and, most importantly, has the shortest air drying time. I won't turn any rough blank until the moisture is down to 6% to 8%. Indian rosewood is dry within three to four months. There are times when a rough turned blank/ bowl doesn't even go oval. Consequently, I leave the walls of my Indian rosewood thin when I rough turn them. Never lost one yet.

Mesquite (honey, velvet, black and South American): Turns well; will dull the edge of your gouge quickly when it's dry. Takes a beautiful finish, almost like glass. Very dense and brittle when dry — if you drop it on a tile or stone floor, forget it.

Willow Acacia (poor man's black walnut here in Arizona): Absolutely beautiful stuff. Like Indian rosewood and mesquites, it cuts nicely and the finish is gorgeous when sanding just to 220.

Shammel Ash: Without a doubt, the easiest wood to turn because it cuts so nicely. Takes a nice finish. I have made some really large bowls from Shammel ash that are quite breathtaking.

Arizona Madrone, Brazilian Pepper Tree, Chinaberry, Bottle Brush, Ironwood, Texas Ebony: All are small trees here in Arizona, so the bowls generally average no bigger than 6" to 8". Nice woods to turn and all take a good finish. I usually include these small bowls in my shows to add some variety, both in size and color.

## **AVERAGE**

Palo Verde, Sumac, Cabot, Silk Oak: All of these woods are a challenge to air dry. Over the past three or four years, I have tried various methods with limited success. Here, like with most other woods, I have come to believe that air drying is as much an art as it is a science — with a little luck thrown in. My loss rate with these woods is almost 25%.

## **POOR**

All the Eucalyptus (Red, Brown, Silver Dollar, etc.): Tough to rough turn until you get through the dense, fibrous outer bark and cambium layer. The wood itself is extremely dense and heavy and requires a sharp tool to cut well.

*Chinese Elm:* Extremely dense and hard, especially when dry; like trying to cut granite with a butter knife. I avoid it if I can.

*Mulberry*: Not too bad when it's wet, but finish turning is a challenge; will take an edge off your bowl gouge ASAP (I don't care what type of steel you're using). Very pretty when it's done, so I try to include some in my inventory.