

Garden

If you have a lot of small gourds you may want to lay them out to dry on a bench covered with hardware cloth. An old screen door placed on blocks can also be a good place for drying small gourds. For medium-sized gourds a small hole can be drilled in the stem. Insert a cable tie and lock that into a loop then hang the gourds up to dry, either in the rafters of the garage on a screened in porch or other suitable place.

Very large gourds can be placed on a pallet with the stem hanging down for the water to drip out. Or a hole can be drilled in the gourd to allow the excess water to escape more easily. Many growers will drill larger gourds to speed up the drying process, so they'll have them for sale more quickly, and to collect the seeds for next year's planting. At this point you'll want to keep them in a place where they can be watched for signs of rot or caving in.

Never dry skin-on gourds in the house. As the gourds dry the skin molds and gives off spores and an unpleasant odor. I recommend leaving medium sized and larger gourds outside where they can dry and get lots of good air circulation. Small gourds are likely to be blown around if left outdoors to dry, so you may want to consider drying them in the garage or have a wire or plastic mesh enclosure to corral the little gourds as the wind blows.

The only exception to drying gourds outdoors or in the garage is for green cleaned gourds. Green cleaned gourds can be dried in the house because you are preventing mold from forming on the gourd. The average green cleaned gourd will be completely dry in three months rather than the six to twelve months if the skin had been left on. **Warning.** You can lose some gourds in this process. Some green-cleaned gourds dry out too fast and develop cracks or deep wrinkles in their shells. This is very true with dippers as their necks are very prone to these cracks.

Green Cleaning

When all your gourds have been harvested and stored, you may wish to choose some to be green cleaned a week or two after harvesting them. Green cleaning will leave the gourd with a very light color that is great for pyrography. For green cleaning you'll need a dull edged knife like a butter knife to scrape off the gourd skin. As soon as you begin to remove the skin, the gourd will begin to sweat out water and it will get slippery to hang onto.

Remove all the skin and check for any missed spots in what you've finished. Then wash the gourd off with a 10% solution of bleach and water. Wipe the gourd with a dry towel and place it on a thick section of newspaper to dry. You will need to wipe each gourd once a week for a month with a bleach

wipe to prevent any mold from forming. (Note: accompanying article for more information on green cleaning and crafting the Hawaiian way.)

May your fall harvest be full of wonderful gourds with thick walls and your supply of gourds more plentiful than ever before. Until the next time, happy gourding!



Carolyn Rushton green cleaned this gourd.

Ni'ihau Ipu: Hawaiian Method of Gourd Decoration

Ni'ihau Ipu is the method used by ancient native Hawaiians to decorate gourds, Ipu being the Hawaiian term for gourd. Used for many things including drums, other musical instruments and water storage, decorated gourds have been part of the Hawaiian culture for hundreds of years.

The Ni'ihau method came out of obscurity due to the efforts of Ka'imiloa Chrisman who re-created the process after much experimentation and research. Visit www.Hawaiigourdsociety.com for more information and instructions for using this method.

A First Adventure with Ni'ihau Ipu

By Kathryn Nevers

- Pluck a fully mature gourd from the vine.
- Consider designs carefully. The bear motif I chose was too intricate for this first timer!
- Draw the design on the green gourd with pen.
- Leave the skin on the areas to be dyed. Capillary action will pull the dye through the skin on these areas.
- Remove skin from areas that should remain natural. Capillary action will not occur in skin off areas.
- Use a sharp knife to carefully cut the outline of your design. Be sure not to nick the shell of the gourd as each nick will become an un-dyed line in the design. (Note: dull knives are used when green scraping an entire gourd for pyrography and other design techniques.)

Continued on page 52

Hawaiian Method continued



Melanie Martin (IL) green scraped all around the horse image last September/October and then left it over the winter to see what happened. There are 4 total horses around the gourd. The final steps were to outline the image with a wood burner and apply Johnson's Paste wax for the final finish.

- Remove skin from areas not to be dyed by carefully using a sharp knife to lift and peel small pieces away from the design elements so as not to damage the images.
- I cut several inches from the top of my birdhouse gourd and scooped out just a bit of the insides to make room for several cups of coffee.
- Place gourd in plastic or aluminum tray to catch seepage and fill with a thick mixture of coffee. I combined a large jar of instant coffee with 2-3 cups of water and achieved a soft umber color. It'll be interesting to try other vegetable dyes next time.
- Soak for a month or more, adding more coffee as it evaporates. I let mine soak until I could see the stain penetrating the bear

images on the outside of the gourd, about two months.

- At this point I poured off the dye and most of the goop from inside the gourd and allowed it to dry naturally before removing the rest of the skin. Next time I might try removing the remaining skin immediately after the dyeing process.
- After cleaning and sanding lightly I polished my gourd with natural shoe polish.
- Bonus: the inside of the gourd is dyed a lovely brown too!

Questions and Observations:

- Researching vegetable dyes and other colors would be useful for experimenting with using this method.
- I kept my gourd in the garage to avoid freezing. Does this matter?
- Knife skills are easier said than learned! That being the case, fine detail can be achieved with practice.
- If I remove the un-dyed skin immediately after pouring off the dye, would the result be a more uniform dye color?
- By waiting until the gourd dried and molded I did get a more mottled dye color.

I hope my experience provides a starting point for others to try Ni'ihau Ipu !



Kathy Nevers' Bear created following the Ni'ihau Ipu methodology of dyeing the scraped design from the inside with strong coffee

Ni'ihau Ipu: Another First Adventure

by Janet Schlauderaff



Thanks to Kathryn Nevers for inspiring me to try Ni'ihau Ipu with her instructional article in the Fall 2013 issue of *The Gourd Magazine*. My experience was very enjoyable!

It was late in the season when I read the article. I scarcely had a green gourd that wasn't beginning to rot. I choose the best one left to work. I decided to go

After

with a flow around design which included some small spots, just to see if it would work. Since this was my first attempt at green cleaning, I was being cautious not to cut the outline too hard. Later, I found a less mature green gourd to work and discovered how to make a better defined line. However, that gourd caved in after it was cleaned.

Following Kathryn's instructions, I cut the top off my designed gourd, removed a lot of the inside, and kept it filled with strong coffee - for a few months, literally. I was pretty busy, but would occasionally check to

see if it needed to be filled. Finally I got to cleaning it by mid March. There were no signs that it worked by its appearance before washing. But once I started to scrub, I was so pleased with the outcome. It was magical!

After it completely dried, I trimmed around the rim. I think it may have been the coffee which made it pretty tough to cut. At first I thought it needed some contrast color around the rim, like a patina. But, I really loved the look of how the coffee color approached the shell. So, it wound up with some sea grass and stone beads allowing the rim and interior to be seen for show and tell! I treated the exterior with Howard Feed-N-Wax.



I believe that the extended length of time that the gourd remained filled caused the dye to be pulled through onto the shell in the cleaned areas. It created a fluttering vein look.

Before

Fortunately I found the effect attractive on this particular gourd! Plus, I noted that the dye did not pull through on some spots where the epidermis was damaged.

I recommend trying this method to anyone having the opportunity to work a fresh garden gourd. It was a fun and interesting experience. I can't wait for this year's gourd crop to create and learn more.



Rim