

Growing A Gourd In A



Two mini gourds, one was shaped in a flat mold and green cleaned, the other was not.

Have you ever thought about entering the Jim Story Award competition but you don't want to break any of your dipper gourds learning how to tie a gourd in a knot? Here is a fun and easy project that can be entered in the Jim Story Award competition.

Materials

- Two boards that are at least $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick (length and width of wood/plywood depend on how large your gourds are)
- 4 threaded screws (you can purchase 1 long threaded screw and cut into 4 equal pieces with a hack saw)
- 8 nuts or 8 wing nuts (must fit on threaded screws)

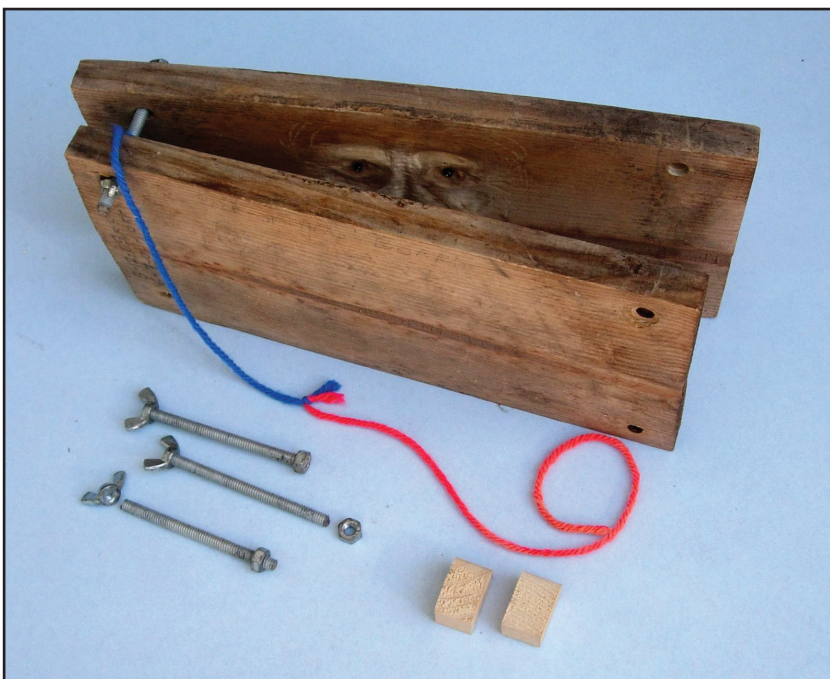


Photo 2 - Supplies

Steps

1. Imagine your mature gourd flattened and make sure there is plenty of room for the gourd to spread out.
2. Drill holes at all 4 corners of the wood, not too close to the edge or it will be too weak. Make sure all of the holes on the two boards line up.
3. Place the screws through the holes and attach the nuts or wing nuts. In this photo bright colored yarn was tied to the mold to make it easier to visualize the gourd vine. [Photo 2]
4. Small blocks of wood can be placed on both ends of the flat mold to hold it apart an inch or so. Insert all 4 threaded screws into the corners and tighten the wing-nuts to secure the boards in place as shown in

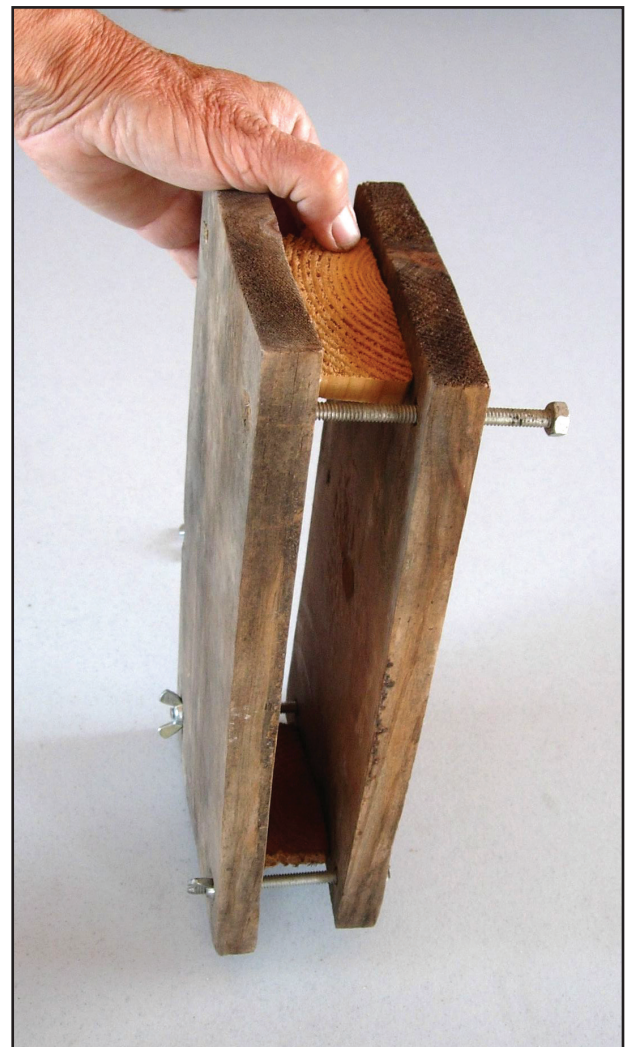


Photo 3. Set up with end pieces in place until gourd has reached the desired height

Flat Mold

By Betty Finch (see bio on page 51)



Photo 4. Placing mold on the vine.

5. Once your flat mold has been assembled it is ready to place on the vine.

6. Find a baby gourd that has a shiny look to the skin to place in the mold. Dull skin means the gourd has not been sufficiently pollinated and is not going to set. Gently place a baby gourd into the middle of the mold taking care not to bruise or scrape the skin. It is best if the gourd is small enough that it doesn't touch both boards yet. [Photo 4]

7. Check the gourd daily for 2 or 3 days to make sure the baby gourd has set and is growing. The baby gourd should be tightly wedged in by the 2nd day. If it does not appear to be growing move the mold to a different gourd. Once you are sure the gourd has set (is growing) don't mess with it again.

8. If more than one baby gourd shrivels up you may need paint the top of the mold white to keep it cooler, especially if you live in a very hot, dry climate.



9. Now just leave the gourd alone. If the mold is removed too soon the gourd will try to go back to a round shape so the longer you leave it on, the better.

10. Try to choose a gourd variety that will fit within the mold when mature. Be careful not to place the baby gourd too close to a threaded screw or it will produce a notch in the gourd where it touches. If you choose a gourd variety that is too large for your mold, it will out-grow the mold and produce unsightly bulges at the edges.



Photo 6. Instead of a plain flat mold try carving a reverse-pattern in the wood such as this face. Remember not to carve any undercuts or you will not be able to get the wood mold off.

11. Here is an example of a gourd that out-grew its mold. It will also have a dent where the threaded screw is touching. [Photo 5]

Challenge yourself! Get fancy. What new ideas can you come up with to make your molded gourd special? Get creative, get molding and have fun! Take pictures along the way as I have done here, sharing the process of how you created your gourd and helping others learn how to do it is what Jim Story was all about.

Photo 5. This gourd out-grew the mold