

AMERICAN GOURD SOCIETY

JUDGING HANDBOOK



Adopted February 2008

AMERICAN GOURD SOCIETY

JUDGING HANDBOOK

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of the AGS shall be directed to the education and instruction of those persons who are interested in the culture, uses, history, and/or crafting of gourds. Competition at gourd shows should be in support of this purpose.
- 1.2 In all competition entries, gourds must predominate. In other words, a gourd or gourd piece(s) must be obvious as all or part of the entry. No entries are allowed that do not include one or more gourds or gourd pieces.
- 1.3 Competition should be designed to be attractive to beginning or hobbyist gourders, as well as accomplished artists. Categories and awards should be designed to be inclusive of all of our members.
- 1.4 Competition should be for the purpose of encouraging and rewarding gourd growers and crafters. Winning should be a source of pride, but the competition should foster a sense of accomplishment for all, not of winners and losers.
- 1.5 These guidelines are optional for all AGS chapters and other nonaffiliated organizations. However, if these guidelines are adopted for a particular competition, the organizing committee may advertise that their competition will be “in accordance with the standards of the American Gourd Society.”
- 1.6 These guidelines should be widely available to all persons who will be entering in the competition. They will be published in the AGS magazine and available on the AGS website.
- 1.7 If the show advertises that they are using these judging standards, they will publish in advance which scoring option (A, B, or C) they are using, and any changes to rule 7.6.

2. JUDGES

2.1 Qualifications

- 2.1.1 Judges should be chosen with experience in both gourds and art.
- 2.1.2 Judges must be impartial and consistent.

2.2 AGS Certified Judges

- 2.2.1 AGS certified judges must be a current member in good standing of the AGS
- 2.2.2 If one or more AGS certified judges are available, one of them shall be appointed as the head judge (see 4.1).
- 2.2.3 Although not necessary under these guidelines, an AGS certified judge lends credibility to the competition and the appearance that the guidelines will be followed. If no AGS certified judge is available, the show chair shall appoint a head judge.

2.3 Clerks

- 2.3.1 Clerks may be anyone, including those with an interest in becoming a judge, whether or not otherwise trained or certified. Clerks do not assist in judging.
- 2.3.2 Clerks serve the purpose of keeping official records of the judges' decisions, so should be chosen for their ability to keep accurate and clear records of the judging.

3. COMPETITION FACILITY

- 3.1 The competition should be held in an area separate from other activities of the event or show. This can be a separate building, a separate room, or an area that is physically and visibly separated from the other activities.
- 3.2 The competition area will have sufficient tables, hangers, and other displays as appropriate to ensure the judges and the public can view all of the entries.
- 3.3 Categories in the competition will be clearly marked and divided so the judges and public can see what gourds are entered in the various categories.
- 3.4 To the extent possible, the competition area will be able to be isolated during the judging so no persons other than the judges and clerks will be present at that time.
- 3.5 The competition area will be designed with reasonable security when the event is closed (such as overnight); however under these guidelines the sponsoring group is not responsible for the safety/security of the entries.

4. JUDGING AUTHORITY

- 4.1 The head judge will be appointed by the chair of the show/event (see 2.2.2). The head judge will organize and brief the teams, and provide general supervision of the judging procedures.
- 4.2 The decision of awards by a judging team is final. However, if the team decides they want assistance, they may ask the Head Judge for advice and/or a decision.
- 4.3 Once announced, awards and ribbons are final and will not be withdrawn.
- 4.4 In case of a clear error, awards will not be withdrawn. However, duplicate awards (such as another first place ribbon) may be given at the discretion of the head judge in order to correct errors.
- 4.5 The head judge shall transmit the results of the judging, as provided by the clerk(s), in written form to the chair of the show/event; the chair will accept the results without any modification or change.

5. PREJUDGING ACTIVITIES

- 5.1 The head judge will meet with the judges and clerks in a private area prior to any judging activities. If possible, the show chair will be invited to attend this meeting to answer any questions and give the judges the sense of the show's objectives.
- 5.2 The head judge is responsible for implementing the guidance of the show chair and committee as to the general approach to awards.
- 5.3 The judges will discuss the use of the 1-5 scale. The entire scale should be used; a score of 1 does not imply a poor piece, just a piece that is less deserving of a high score than others in that group. A score of 5 does not imply perfection, but a piece that is deserving of a higher score than others in that group.
- 5.4 Although not a requirement of these guidelines, it is very strongly suggested that there be several dry runs judging gourds not in competition. Judges will simulate the real judging process, but will then discuss and defend their individual scores to the others for the purpose of honing their own scoring and coordinating their scoring approach with the others.
- 5.5 Judges should be identified with a nametag or other identifying items. AGS certified judges should also carry/wear appropriate identification. Throughout the show, judges who remain should be reasonably available to anyone to explain the judging procedures.
- 5.6 Judges should have appropriate measuring tools, such as a measuring tape and ruler.

6. JUDGING PROCEDURE

- 6.1 If possible, the judging team for each category should consist of at least 3 judges (except for a conflict of interest, see below). The judging teams may be as large as the head judge decides, or smaller if it is not possible to find enough judges.
- 6.2 The judges may be divided into separate teams. Different teams will be assigned different categories to judge, based on their desires or qualifications, by the head judge.
- 6.3 Each judging team will have a clerk assigned for official record keeping. There may be more than one clerk per team, but only one will be responsible for the official records.
- 6.4 When a judge recognizes the work of an artist who is a family member or close friend, or their own work, they should excuse themselves from that class judging, or ask another team to judge that class.
- 6.5 Judges may discuss among themselves any aspect of the entries, and may call upon the head judge for his/her advice or opinion. Other than those people, no others (including the clerk unless asked) will participate in the judging discussion.
- 6.6 Disqualification
 - 6.6.1 The judging team may disqualify entries if they do not qualify under the description of the category. Before doing so, they will consult with the head judge, who should normally defer to the judging team, but may choose to make the final decision. The head judge may decide to move an entry to a more appropriate category, rather than to disqualify.
 - 6.6.2 No disqualification will be done without the knowledge and final approval of the head judge in the competition.
 - 6.6.3 Before disqualifying an entry, an attempt should be made to find an appropriate category for the entry to be placed. Once placed, that category may be re-judged. Since the awards have not been announced at that time, the previous judging of that category is replaced by the new judging.
 - 6.6.4 If the artist who created the disqualified entry appeals to the head judge (after completion of the judging) in a timely manner, and the head judge agrees that a clear error was made, then that entry will be eligible to be reconsidered and perhaps receive a duplicate award.
 - 6.6.5 Other than the requirement that gourds must predominate, nothing will be disqualified from the “my way” or similar catch-all category unless specific show requirements state otherwise.
- 6.7 Considerations while judging
 - 6.7.1 Be receptive to the unique, the unusual, the different.
 - 6.7.2 Keep an open mind; curb your own personal biases.
 - 6.7.3 View the work up close and at a distance.
 - 6.7.4 What is the overall impact?
 - 6.7.5 How original is the piece?
 - 6.7.6 Note how it relates to the category in which it is entered.
 - 6.7.7 How is it executed?
 - 6.7.8 Is it appealing?
 - 6.7.9 Does it contribute to the natural beauty of the gourd?
 - 6.7.10 Be fair, consistent and careful; be conscientious and honest.
- 6.8 Scoring

SCORING OPTION A (DETAILED SCORING)

- 6.8.1 Judges will have scoring sheets and write their scores on each one. Then, they will hand their sheets to the clerk, who will add the totals, and order the entries from first to last (see results below). Although discussion of the gourd is completely open and interactive between the judges (and, if they wish, the head judge), scoring is individual. The clerk will compute the scores; first place to the highest score, second to the second highest, and so forth for as many places as determined by the show committee.
- 6.8.2 Use the entire range for scoring. Individual scores are not revealed to the entrants.
- 6.8.3 Raw and current season gourds – maximum of 10 points
 - 6.8.3.1 Cultural perfection, quality, cleanliness and maturity. 1-5 points
 - 6.8.3.2 Trueness of type and color. 1-5 points
 - 6.8.3.3 In case of size competition, the above scoring will not apply. For example, the winning gourd in a “longest dipper” category will be the longest qualifying entry.
 - 6.8.3.4 In case of matching competition, the above scoring will apply. If, for example, the category is “three identical apple gourds,” the first points (cultural perfection...) will reflect the degree to which the gourds are identical.
- 6.8.4 Gourd Craft – maximum of 25 points
 - 6.8.4.1 Originality of design 1-5 points
 - 6.8.4.2 Quality of craftsmanship and gourd 1-5 points
 - 6.8.4.3 Creativity and artistry 1-5 points
 - 6.8.4.4 Color and/or finish, accessories, decorative work 1-5
 - 6.8.4.5 Appropriate for category 1-5 points
- 6.8.5 Growers Division
 - 6.8.5.1 Gourds must have been grown by the exhibitor/entrant.
 - 6.8.5.2 Dried gourds have all the water evaporated leaving a lightweight shell.
 - 6.8.5.3 For specimen gourds (a specific variety), trueness of type and color must be observed. Specimen gourds have no indication of excess grooming or training.
 - 6.8.5.4 Gourds entered in the growers classes are not required to have stems unless specifically required by the category. If present, stem must be washed with skin and dirt removed from the crevices, and the end trimmed.
 - 6.8.5.4.1 One or more categories specifically requiring stems may be established by the competition, but as a general rule stems are not required.
 - 6.8.5.5 Gourds must be true to type, mature and clean.
 - 6.8.5.6 Assorted gourd groupings must be of various sizes, shapes, and varieties.
 - 6.8.5.7 Identical gourd groupings must be the same size, shape, color hue, and variety.
 - 6.8.5.8 Hand trained gourds have been manipulated by hand during growth to achieve a specific shape.
 - 6.8.5.9 Freak growth gourds must have a unique shape that occurred naturally with no human intervention of any kind (no training, starving, growth interference).
- 6.8.6 If there are specific categories where these scoring guidelines are not appropriate, the competition sponsor (show chair, show committee, chapter president, etc.) will establish a judging standard for that category, and publish it in advance so those entering will know how they will be scored. The judges will use that standard (point scale or other objective method).
 - 6.8.6.1 The intention of these guidelines is to instill confidence in competitors that their gourds will be consistently and fairly graded, and know how they will be judged even though they have not

participated in a particular show. For that reason, exceptions to these scoring guidelines should be rare.

SCORING OPTION B (SIMPLIFIED SCORES)

- 6.8.1 Judges will discuss the gourds among themselves, then individually choose the rank order of the entries (1 for the best, 2 for the next best, so forth). They will identify to the clerk their scores. The clerk will then add the scores; the lowest score is first place, next lowest score is second place, and so forth (lower scores are better). For example, if there are three judges, and they all pick the same gourd for first place, the total for that gourd would be 3. In case of tie, the judges will break the tie by consultation.
 - 6.8.1.1 Each judge is giving each gourd a single rank-order score. If there are two entries, one gourd will be “1” (for the judge’s opinion of first place) and the other will be “2” (second place). Remember, the lowest total is the winner.
- 6.8.2 The top ranked gourds will win first, second, etc. place (as many places as determined by the show committee).
- 6.8.3 Raw and current season gourds. Judges will consider the following:
 - 6.8.3.1 50% cultural perfection, quality, cleanliness and maturity.
 - 6.8.3.2 50% Trueness of type and color.
 - 6.8.3.3 In case of size competition, subjective scoring will not apply, just the absolute measurement. For example, the winning gourd in a “longest dipper” category will be the longest qualifying entry.
 - 6.8.3.4 In case of matching competition, the above scoring will apply. If, for example, the category is “three identical apple gourds,” the first points (cultural perfection...) will reflect the degree to which the gourds are identical.
- 6.8.4 Gourd Craft
 - 6.8.4.1 50% Originality: Overall design/theme, craftsmanship, accessories, artistic quality
 - 6.8.4.2 50% Workmanship: Neatness and quality, color/finish, balance/scale, overall appearance
 - 6.8.4.2 If the quality of the gourd used is poor, judges will reduce their rank-order decision for that gourd as they deem appropriate
- 6.8.5 Growers Division
 - 6.8.5.1 Gourds must have been grown by the exhibitor/entrant.
 - 6.8.5.2 Dried gourds have all the water evaporated leaving a lightweight shell.
 - 6.8.5.3 For specimen gourds (a specific variety), trueness of type and color must be observed. Specimen gourds have no indication of excess grooming or training.
 - 6.8.5.4 Gourds entered in the growers classes are not required to have stems unless specifically required by the category. If present, stem must be washed with skin and dirt removed from the crevices, and the end trimmed.
 - 6.8.5.4.1 One or more categories specifically requiring stems may be established by the competition, but as a general rule stems are not required.
 - 6.8.5.5 Gourds must be true to type, mature and clean.
 - 6.8.5.6 Assorted gourd groupings must be of various sizes, shapes, and varieties.
 - 6.8.5.7 Identical gourd groupings must be the same size, shape, color hue, and variety.
 - 6.8.5.8 Hand trained gourds have been manipulated by hand during growth to achieve a specific shape.
 - 6.8.5.9 Freak growth gourds must have a unique shape that occurred naturally with no human intervention of any kind (no training, starving, growth interference).

- 6.8.6 If there are specific categories where these scoring guidelines are not appropriate, the competition sponsor (show chair, show committee, chapter president, etc.) will establish a judging standard for that category, and publish it in advance so those entering will know how they will be scored. The judges will use that standard (point scale or other objective method).
- 6.8.6.1 The intention of these guidelines is to instill confidence in competitors that their gourds will be consistently and fairly graded, and know how they will be judged even though they have not participated in a particular show. For that reason, exceptions to these scoring guidelines should be rare.

SCORING OPTION C (VERBAL CONSENSUS)

- 6.8.1 Judges will discuss the entries as they meet the below guidelines, then by agreement or consensus choose the winners. They will award first, second, and so forth according to the number of places established by the show committee.
- 6.8.2 Although this award selection process is not based on scoring but on mutual discussion, the following guidelines will be used as a basis for the discussions.
- 6.8.3 Raw and current season gourds.
- 6.8.3.1 Consider cultural perfection, quality, cleanliness and maturity, balanced with trueness of type and color
- 6.8.3.2 In case of size competition, discussion is basically not necessary, just measurement and confirmation of the measurement. For example, the winning gourd in a “longest dipper” category will be the longest qualifying entry.
- 6.8.3.3 In case of matching competition, the major consideration is the degree to which the gourds are identical.
- 6.8.4 Gourd Craft
- 6.8.4.1 Consider originality of design, balanced by quality of the workmanship.
- 6.8.4.2 Originality considerations are overall design/theme, craftsmanship, suitability of accessories, and artistic qualities.
- 6.8.4.3 Workmanship considerations are neatness and quality, color/finish, balance/scale, and overall appearance.
- 6.8.4.4 If the quality of the gourd used is poor, judges should rank the gourd lower than they would otherwise.
- 6.8.5 Growers Division
- 6.8.5.1 Gourds must have been grown by the exhibitor/entrant.
- 6.8.5.2 Dried gourds have all the water evaporated leaving a lightweight shell.
- 6.8.5.3 For specimen gourds (a specific variety), trueness of type and color must be observed. Specimen gourds have no indication of excess grooming or training.
- 6.8.5.4 Gourds entered in the growers classes are not required to have stems unless specifically required by the category. If present, stem must be washed with skin and dirt removed from the crevices, and the end trimmed.
- 6.8.5.4.1 One or more categories specifically requiring stems may be established by the competition, but as a general rule stems are not required.
- 6.8.5.5 Gourds must be true to type, mature and clean.
- 6.8.5.6 Assorted gourd groupings must be of various sizes, shapes, and varieties.
- 6.8.5.7 Identical gourd groupings must be the same size, shape, color hue, and variety.
- 6.8.5.8 Hand trained gourds have been manipulated by hand during growth to achieve a specific shape.

6.8.5.9 Freak growth gourds must have a unique shape that occurred naturally with no human intervention of any kind (no training, starving, growth interference).

6.8.6 If there are specific categories where these scoring guidelines are not appropriate, the competition sponsor (show chair, show committee, chapter president, etc.) will establish a judging standard for that category, and publish it in advance so those entering will know how they will be scored. The judges will use that standard (point scale or other objective method).

6.8.6.1 The intention of these guidelines is to instill confidence in competitors that their gourds will be consistently and fairly graded, and know how they will be judged even though they have not participated in a particular show. For that reason, exceptions to these scoring guidelines should be rare.

7.0 AWARDS

- 7.1 The show chair/committee will determine the individual categories and classes and the maximum number of awards (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc) to be given in each categories or class. This information should be published in advance of the show if possible.
- 7.2 Once the clerk has totaled the scores, the clerk will inform the judges of the rank order of the entries. The top entry will receive the 1st place (usually known as the Blue Ribbon) award, the next entry will receive 2nd place, etc. If the award is of appropriate design (such as a ribbon or certificate), it will be immediately placed on/near the winning gourd(s). The name of the winner will be written somewhere on the ribbon/certificate.
- 7.3 In case of ties in the score, the judges will confer and decide on a tiebreaker. Duplicate place awards may be given.
- 7.4 The judges are not bound to give out all of the place awards if they feel some entrants are not deserving of an award.
- 7.5 If there are two or more entries in a particular category, a first place winner must be chosen and awarded. Normally the other entry will receive a second place award.
- 7.6 If there is only one entry in a category, the normal procedure is to give that entry a first place award. However, in exceptional circumstances, if the judges believe the entry does not deserve a first place award, they will not give an award. The show committee may establish (and must announce in advance) specific guidelines for this rule.
- 7.7 At this time the names of the artists are not revealed, as there may be further awards (such as best of show).

8.0 COMBINED/OVERALL AWARDS

- 8.1 The show chair/committee may establish, in advance, certain awards that are cross-category (such as best of class).
- 8.2 Once the individual category judging is complete, the judges will consider all the first place winners for any combined class award. The same scoring scale will be used.
- 8.3 Once combined class awards are decided, there may be other special awards (such as best newcomer, best of show, President's award, best related to show theme, etc.). These awards are made at the discretion of the show chair/committee, and are outside the authority of the head judge and the judges.
 - 8.3.1 Of course, the decision of these awards may be made by some or all of the same judges at the request of the show committee. However, when they do so, they are acting outside these guidelines, and are not bound by them. Their selection process is guided by the show chair/committee.
- 8.4 If there is a category that requires gourds to match the theme of the show, the show chair/committee can do the judging for that category or may assign that duty to the judges.

8.5 Any AGS-sponsored award may only be awarded if there is an AGS certified judge or AGS elected officer present and part of the award decision process.

9. ENTRIES

- 9.1 Individuals will place their gourds into competition according to procedures set up by the individual event.
- 9.2 Each gourd will have attached (or otherwise kept with it) a tag with the entrant's name. This tag will be folded or otherwise obscured so the name is not visible to the judges during the judging portion of the show.
- 9.3 Late entries are at the discretion of the show chair/committee. However, if an entry is accepted after a particular category has been judged, that category will not be re-judged.
- 9.4 A gourd may be entered in only one category/class per show.

10. WHAT THESE GUIDELINES DO NOT COVER

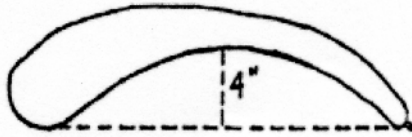
- 10.1 These guidelines are intended to standardize and make public the procedure used to select the award winners in competition at gourd shows.
- 10.2 The following areas are not a part of these guidelines and reside solely with the individual show chair/committee:
 - 10.2.1 Categories and qualification for entry into each category.
 - 10.2.2 Selection of what category a particular gourd should/must enter.
 - 10.2.3 Who may enter the competition.
 - 10.2.4 Entry acceptance time, place, and procedure.
 - 10.2.5 What the awards are (ribbons, plaques, monetary, other).
 - 10.2.6 Choosing winners of awards other than individual categories and best of category/class.
 - 10.2.7 Decision as to whether competition gourds may be offered for sale while in the display area.
 - 10.2.8 Decision as to when gourds may be picked up after judging is complete
 - 10.2.9 Entry fee, if any.
 - 10.2.10 Whether vendors are required to enter gourds.
- 10.3 The decision as to whether a gourd may be entered is up to the show chair/committee. For example, some shows do not permit gourds to be entered in subsequent years, or may have other restrictions. Entry qualifications are up to the show; the judges will judge what is presented to them.

11. PHOTOGRAPHY

- 11.1 Gourds entered in competition are available for photography or sketching by anyone or any organization.
- 11.2 Photographs of the gourds in competition may not be used by anyone for any income or profit producing activity. Fair use (newsletters, chapter websites) is allowed.

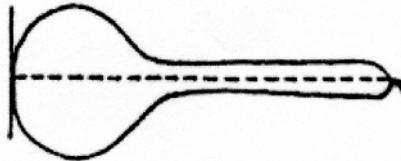
12. MEASURING GOURDS

- 12.1 Differentiation between straight and curved/crooked gourd is accomplished by measuring the maximum above ground clearance of the gourd:

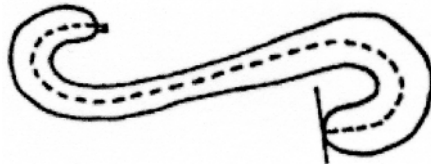


12.1.1 The stem is not a part of the measurement. Straight gourds must be 4 inches or less; curved/crooked gourds are more than 4 inches.

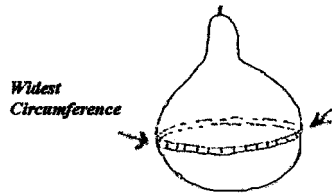
12.2 A straight gourd is measured from blossom end to stem. The stem is not included in the measurement:



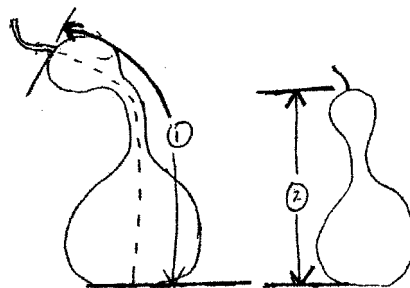
12.3 Curved/crooked gourds are measured along the center top of the gourd from the blossom end to the stem:



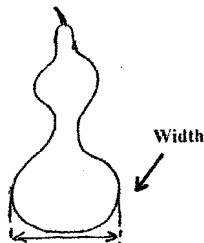
12.4 The circumference is measured at the gourd's widest point, when standing in an upright position:



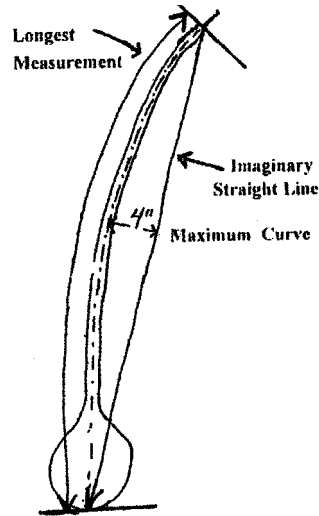
12.5 The height is measured two ways. The longest measurement applies. First, measure from the blossom end to the stem protrusion with the gourd's curvature. Then measure at the highest point when the gourd sits upright, stem not included:



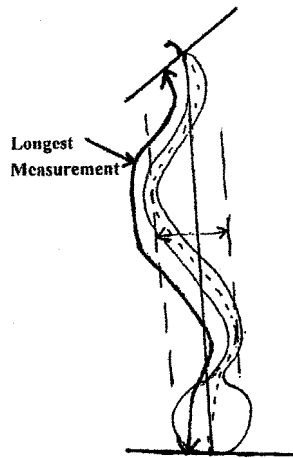
12.6 The width is measured at the gourd's widest point when it sits upright:



- 12.7 The longest measurement, with less than 4 inches of curve measurement: The imaginary straight line runs from the blossom end to the stem protrusion of the gourd, stem not included. The deepest point of the curve (as defined in section 12.1) may not exceed 4 inches:



- 12.8 Longest Measurement must have no more than 4 inch total curvature. To test this, measure the gourd's length from blossom end to stem end in a straight line; then measure the gourd's length from stem center to blossom center, following the natural curvature of the gourd. The difference between the two measurements cannot exceed 4 inches:



13. NATURAL MATERIALS

- 13.1 At times a category calls for only natural materials. Examples of natural materials are linen or cotton cords, pine needles, animal or plant parts, and flowers.
- 13.2 Examples of non-natural materials are many paints and dyes, glass or plastic, and wires.
- 13.3 The show chair/committee may specify overall exceptions for minor amount of non-natural materials (such as a plastic stand to hold up a gourd, or artificial sinew to bind pine needles), or may make a decision to allow a particular entry in a category specified as natural (such as a dyed leather piece).
- 13.4 If such exceptions are made, they should be in the show program and brought to the attention of the judges before the judging process. The judges will honor the show chair/committee's decision.
- 13.5 If the category states "substantially" or "predominantly" or some other indication of a majority of natural materials, then the piece should be at least 90% natural materials.

14. DEFINITIONS

- 14.1 Gourd. The fruit in the Cucurbitaceae family of plants.
 - 14.1.1 Raw gourd - a hollow, dried shell of a fruit in the Cucurbitaceae family of plants.
 - 14.1.2 Current season gourd - A recently harvested gourd which still contains the green coloring and water weight before it has dried.
- 14.2 Varieties of gourds. The varieties as depicted in the most recent issue of The Gourd that has a variety chart.
- 14.3 Cleaned. A gourd that has had surface dirt and membrane removed via any process such as hand washing, scrubbing, machine washing.
- 14.4 Carving. Any result of removal of a portion of the shell of a gourd exposing the undersurface. Knives, rotary tools, gouges, or any other tools may be used for this general result.
 - 14.4.1 Chipping. A type of carving performed with gouging tools to “chip” out a small piece of a gourd at a time.
- 14.5 Woodburning. Marking the surface of a gourd by the use of heat, ordinarily using a woodburner system. Other possibilities are heated metal tools or torches.
- 14.6 Birdhouse. A gourd prepared so it would reasonably serve as a home for wild birds. It has an appropriate size hole, drainage holes, and a method of hanging/attaching to a support (such as a tree or post).
- 14.7 Embellishment. Any decorative item, natural or artificial, attached to a gourd for the purpose of improving the appearance of the work.
- 14.8 Colored gourd. A gourd whose color has been changed with dye, paint, crayon, pencil, marker, or other commonly accepted coloring media.
- 14.9 Cut gourd. A cut gourd is any gourd whose surface has been cut, partially or completely, with a tool such as a knife, saw, hot woodburning pen, awl, or other implement. The gourd does not have to be cut into two pieces, just cut completely through the shell.
- 14.10 Gourd basket. A gourd basket is a gourd with either the top cut off and a carrying handle attached, or cut so part of the gourd remains to act as a handle. The general appearance is a container with a handle for carrying items.
- 14.11 Gourd bowl. A gourd with the top portion cut off. The general appearance is a container that is intended to sit still.