

Well hello again. Another week gone and still the sun beats down on us. I reckon the unfortunate snow-bound New Yorkers would love a bit of our weather. They freeze and we overheat.

This week I have added a few pages about a hugely interesting world timber - **African Blackwood**. The information is located elsewhere in this TT. Happy reading!



Hi my name is **James Gee** and I belong to the Tuesday group of wood turners.

Today I progressed a bit further with my rimu circular inlay. I cut a hole in the bottom of the bowl and made the rimu inlay fit snugly into the recess.

A really tight fit is necessary so the rimu was persuaded somewhat with a few sharp taps where it was secured with aliphatic glue and set aside to dry ready for next week when this project will be completed.

The picture to the right shows **David's** almost completed rimu masterpiece.

The final step will be to embed a suitable object(s) in resin in a 50mm recess at the bottom of the bowl



Garth considers his next step in making his pepper mill



Raewyn worked with a block of Oak and is seen here operating a power sander.

The TUESDAY TEAM

Tuesday 27th Jan demonstrations included:

1. Curing a pen maker's mandrel problem by using a special tool(all)
2. Using steb centres for spindle turning (Jan)
3. Fitting the tailstock to the lathe and tightening the cam mechanism (Raewyn)
4. Fitting a circular wooden inlay to the bottom of a bowl (James)
5. Solving the problem of flush-facing a collect chuck to its housing (Mauritz)

Jan discovered the advantages of using steb centres when spindle turning smaller-sized wood.



Mauritz demonstrates his turning skills with mini tools.

THE THURSDAY CREW

A reminder: next week, (*Thursday 5th February*) **Colin** will be facilitating a **flask making** project with a small group of turners.

Please have your special blocks of wood all set to go. I have set aside at least three weeks for this project.

Those turners not involved in the flask making initiative will continue to work on personal projects with my support. Cheers, **Clive**.

Planning ahead:

*Egg-making project for all to be facilitated by **Spencer***



Murray uses his latest creation with his European Beech hollow form turning.

It works well too!

The steady gadget means a bit more pressure can be put into the chisel



Colin grinds away making a three legged winged bowl from a piece of kanuka wood.



Muhannad has mixed a two-pot epoxy resin and poured it into the prepared channels of his two bowls.

Soon, pesky bubbles appeared but they were quickly eliminated with a small gas-flame gun.

ANNUAL CLUB MEETING (at the club's workshop)

Have you set aside this time and date? **7.00pm Wednesday 18th February**

Please come and contribute your ideas - the club needs your thinking!

YOUR CLUB NEEDS HELPERS (lots of them!)

Nominations are now being taken for all office bearers and general committee members.

Please consider the ways you might make an ongoing contribution to your club.

President

Treasurer

Secretary

Workshop manager

Purchasing officer

Machinery officer

Publicity officer

Fundraising officer

More Turning Happenings



Left: A natural edge mallee bowl.

Right: Many thanks **Muhannad.**

Much appreciated by all.



Robert's Yellow-heart Kahikatea bowl with scallop rim is enhanced with gilt paste on the scalloped edges. Very effective!



Spencer uses our new sanding machine to prepare his block of wood for next week's group project – Flask making.



Bruce takes great care in removing the centre of his kauri bowl.



A paired set of pens made for a good mate.

Rare African blackwood contrasts the gold pen parts.



Andre` prepares himself well by reading the instructions prepared by Colin for the upcoming flask making project.



This little tool is a most useful device to prevent a PEN mandrel shaft from bending under pressure.

THE WORLD'S INTERESTING TIMBERS - AFRICAN BLACKWOOD

Description

The small, unassuming African blackwood (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*) conceals **one of the most sought-after and valuable heartwoods in the world**. Stripping away the yellowish grey **sapwood** reveals the deep purple to brownish black core, this wood is extremely resistant and durable and is known variously as African blackwood, African ebony, 'poyi' and (in Swahili) as 'mpingo'. The African blackwood tree is small and heavily branched, the trunks are seldom straight and many stems may be present; the rough bark is grey with many fissures, and the branches have small spines. Leaves are up to 22 centimetres long and carry small, oval-shaped **leaflets**. In season, the branches of the African blackwood tree are adorned with tiny, white, sweetly-smelling flowers born as clusters on **inflorescences**, which may reach 12 centimetres in length. The seedpods of this tree are flattened oblong cases that are roughly pointed, and contain one or two seeds.

Kingdom **Plantae**

Phylum **Tracheophyta**

Class **Magnoliopsida**

Order **Fabales**

Family **Leguminosae**

Genus ***Dalbergia*** ⁽¹⁾

Also known as

Mozambique ebony, mpingo.

Size Height: 5 - 12 m

Trunk diameter: 20 - 30 cm

The African *Blackwood* is the National Tree of Tanzania



African blackwood biology

The African blackwood is a **deciduous** tree, losing its foliage in the dry season; flowers appear in the second half of the dry season. This tree is long-lived and **extremely slow-growing**. The African blackwood is a vital component of the African savanna ecosystem; the nodules on the roots fix nitrogen producing a more fertile soil, the leaves provide vital browse for **herbivores**, and the extensive root system stabilizes the soil. Mature African blackwood trees are resistant to fire. Different parts of the tree have been used as herbal remedies over the years; the bark may be used to treat diarrhoea, the root is burnt for a smoke-inhalation cure of headaches and colds, and there are many other traditional uses of this important tree in different areas within its range.

African blackwood range

The African blackwood is native to 26 African countries; it is found from Mozambique north to Ethiopia and west from the east African coast to Senegal. **The main strongholds of the tree however, are southern Tanzania and northern Mozambique.**

African blackwood threats

The African blackwood has been highly prized for many centuries for the properties of its [heartwood](#);

- the oily, fine wood was used by the Egyptians for tomb artefacts
- the dark, resistant wood has been used to make utensils, and the Makonde tribe of East Africa make intricate carvings, which are now an important source of tourist revenue.
- Possibly **the most famous use** is for the manufacture of woodwind instruments.
- The unique properties of the African blackwood [heartwood](#) are seen as vital for the production of top quality clarinets; it is dense, resistant, and produces a beautiful tone.
- The export of timber for the manufacture of musical instruments is **an important source of income in countries such as Tanzania, where processed timber fetches up to US \$25,000 per cubic metre**. It is however, a highly inefficient process and up to 90 percent of a tree will be discarded as unsuitable. Whilst the mature trees are being harvested for this trade, younger specimens are under increasing pressure from man-made bushfires, which have increased in frequency as the land is cleared for agriculture.
- It is feared that the continued uncontrolled exploitation of the African blackwood tree will cause it to become commercially extinct within a few decades; it is already threatened in Kenya and noticeably scarcer within Tanzania.

African blackwood conservation

- The African blackwood is the **National Tree** of Tanzania
- it is an immensely important tree, both culturally and economically, and the sustainable management of this tree is vital if trade in its [heartwood](#) is to continue.
- The African Blackwood Conservation Project (ABCP) was founded in 1996 and is working to cultivate young trees with the view to replanting them in areas where it has disappeared.
- Education is also a large part of their work, and the ABCP has set up school programmes in Tanzania to increase the awareness of local people for the conservation issues involved. Fauna & Flora International (FFI) have also been heavily involved with the conservation of the African blackwood tree, particularly through their Global Trees Campaign.
- It is hoped that adopting sustainable measures now will allow this ancient, musical tree to survive

Most Expensive Wood

While not yet on the endangered species list, the African Blackwood—or Mpingo, as the natives of Tanzania call it—is considered a threatened species. It is also the most expensive tree in the world.

Mpingo once grew in southern Ethiopia and Kenya, but can now only be found in Tanzania and northern Mozambique. It is a slow-growing tree that survives on little water, doesn't compete with corn, coffee or bananas and even fixes nitrogen in soil.



Acker Bilk had one of these blackwood clarinets

Lucky blighter! (Psst... – who's Acker Bilk?)

A clarinet, made of African Blackwood

African Blackwood is harvested for the dense hardwood it yields. The wood, once considered ebony, is primarily valued for use in woodwind instruments. **The unsustainability of its harvesting can be attributed to both the tree's 60-year maturation and the smugglers who illegally transport the wood into Kenya.**

The world's most expensive wood commands a price commensurate with its utility and rarity—**buyers can expect to pay up to \$25,000 per cubic metre.**

Want to turn some African blackwood?

OK. You can import small quantities of quality African Blackwood from Craft Supplies, Utah, USA.

Check out the catalogue! Order online!

A superb turning wood particularly suited for **threaded** boxes.

Cheers

Clive

A harvest of African Blackwood

