

D-Way Beading Tools

by Larry Randolph

In my woodturning career, I have never cared much for beads on my turnings. I have felt this way for two reasons. First, I prefer to use figured woods whenever possible; and in my opinion, in many situations, beads take away from the natural beauty of the wood. My second reason (and the one you will razz me about when we meet) is that I am simply just not a fan of the skew. Yes, I have taken Nick Cook's skew class (which was a great class), and yes, I have practiced and practiced, but I'm still not a fan of the skew. But luckily for turners, the skew is not the only tool we have in our arsenal; there are always options!

Now, even though I have admitted that I am not a major fan of beads, I may have found a reason to like them. Back in December, I was one of the winners of the AAW's monthly drawing and won a \$100 gift certificate to D-Way Tools (www.d-waytools.com). I was excited when I talked to Dave Schweitzer, D-Way's owner, and couldn't wait to start picking out my booty. When I called Dave, he was quite a gentleman and gave me a great audio tour of his product offerings from which I could pick any number of tools equal to Ben Franklin's face value. I decided to pay a few extra bucks and chose three of his beading tools and one of his handles. He suggested the short handle, and on his recommendation, it was the one I went with.

After playing with them just a little, I thought that they would be great for a tool review. I chatted with Joe Herrmann about the idea and he suggested that I add to the review D-Way's Diamond Tool (a.k.a. Teardrop Tool), which he saw Dave Schweitzer demo last year. So I communicated with Dave at D-Way and he sent me one to review.

Now, for those of you who won't admit it, I'll say it for you. When I try a new tool, I sometimes feel a little uptight, and it takes me a few minutes to get acclimated and comfortable with it. I talked to Dave about how he presents the diamond (or teardrop) tool to the wood. He told me to place the point side of the diamond tool and flute side of the beading tools on the tool rest. Then, in addition to that, he told me to hold the handle really low. In most of my turning, I find it a little unusual to hold the tool handle that low (or steep) with the business end of the tool upside down on the rest. But you know what? IT WORKED!

With the beading tools (1/16", 1/8", and 1/4"), I found that after I gently rocked them from left to right a few times, I had a perfect bead. Now let me be clear—by rocking, I mean I gently rolled the handle ever so slightly left to right. And by lightly touching, I found beautiful thin,



These beads were turned with the diamond (teardrop) tool on osage orange.



These beads were turned with the 1/16", 1/8" and 1/4" beading tools on osage orange. Consistent spacing was relatively easy with just a few minutes practice.

wispy ribbons of wood being removed. Then with just raising the handle slightly and very gently, the tool is actually capable of removing what looked more like a fine sanding dust, rather than ribbons.

The diamond tool was fun as well. As I held the point of the tool very gently to the wood, I found it acted almost like a very fresh-edged parting tool. The difference with it is



This end-grain beading was done with the 1/4" beading tool. Notice the fine ribbons on the end of the tool.



End-grain work is easy with the teardrop tool. It was quite easy to get very light, delicate cuts by gently touching the tool to the workpiece.



This is an example of the fine ribbons possible with the 1/4" beading tool.

that you can slowly create a V-cut or the bottom edge of a bead quickly. Then after you create that cut on the two sides of where you want the bead to be, you simply roll the edge of the tool out and roll the bead. I picked it up fairly quickly—really! Normally, I am not considered a "quick learner," but in no time at all, I was rolling very consistent beads with this tool.

Dave had told me, "Believe it or not, it is hard to get a catch when you remove the wood just a little at a time." He was correct, as I have yet to cause a catch with the tools, though I think it could happen if someone just forced or drove the tool into the wood. Because of that, keep in mind that these tools are not designed to hog out wood. They are used after most of the shaping is done. I used a light touch as instructed by Dave and found all four of the tools worked completely as advertised.

These tools respond best to solid hardwoods; spalted or punky wood will not readily accept this kind of cutting. I tested them on osage orange, maple, cherry, cocobolo, walnut, and mulberry, and they responded very well on each of them. Along with his other tools, the beading and diamond (teardrop) tools are made from M42 cobalt, high-speed steel that Dave claims will hold its edge longer than other high-speed steels. I must say that I have used both the beading tools and the diamond tool quite a lot, and they still are very sharp and seemingly holding the edge very well. Granted, they don't take much material such as a bowl gouge or skew might, but they are definitely sharp.

The short handle that Dave had recommended is only 8" long, which is significantly shorter than any other tool I own. He explained to me that the short handle allows you to get in closer to your work when holding it at that steep angle. I have to agree that it does give you more room, especially if you are sporting a "turning muscle" (gut), such as the one I have built over the years.

Dave's handles are made out of solid 6061 aluminum round bar and finished with a PVC grip. He offers an 8", a 12", and a 16" to receive a 1/2" tool, and one 16" handle that will accept a 5/8" tool. Additionally, he does offer bushings to accommodate different-size tools: 5/8" to 1/2" and 1/2" to 3/8". The tool handles have two set screws, so that you can quickly switch from one tool to another. They have a threaded knob that will allow you to add ballast if you choose.

Dave has several videos that he just added to his website, which will teach you how he uses his tools. I am certain that he would be more than willing to answer questions for you, as he did for me, either by e-mail at dwaytools@hctc.com or by phone at 360-432-9509. In addition, I did get to see the raw footage of what may turn into a video, which Dave may be selling from his website in the near future. From what I saw, it was shot from great angles with plenty of lighting and explanation as to what he was doing with each tool. Though it is not available at the time of this writing, it may be available soon from his website.

His pricing, as of this time, is \$40.00 per tool (unhandled), including the diamond (teardrop) tool, with the option of saving a little by buying a set of them. The 8" handle that he recommends for all his beading tools is

priced at \$30.00. My advice for those on a tight budget is to pick two tools and one handle. The tools were easily and quickly switched out of the handle with the set screws. The bottom line here is that if you are looking for a way to add bead details to your turnings, these will likely be as much fun for you as they have been for me. Do you want to know if I would buy them? Well, in the near future, I will be picking up the other two beading tools that I don't have to complete my collection.

Larry Randolph

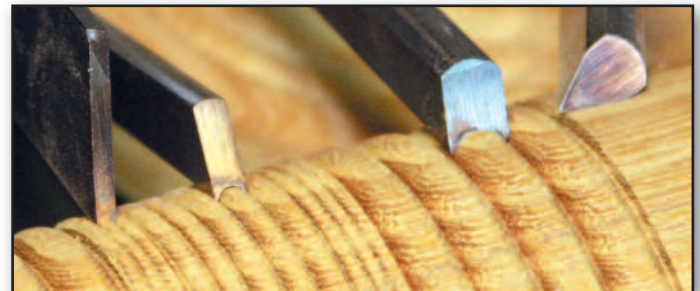
Larry Randolph is a Systems Analyst from Springfield, Missouri. He first discovered his interest in woodturning at the age of thirteen in his Dad's shop on a Craftsman lathe. Just as many others have, he revisited this interest a little later in life and has for the last five years been enjoying all the aspects of this addiction. He has a deep appreciation for the art hidden in wood and finds the real challenge is uncovering that beauty and most importantly, knowing when to stop.

It is in the desire to constantly improve as a turner that Larry enjoys learning about new technologies and tools being developed for turning. He is always interested in finding others that like to share their way of doing things in the shop and learning from each other.

Over the last three years, Larry has served as Vice President for the Woodturners of Southwest Missouri. He is always open to questions and comments at missouriturner@gmail.com, and will have additional pictures and information about this article at www.MissouriTurner.com



All four tools are shown (left to right): handled 1/16\", 1/8\", and handled 1/4\"/>



This shows the close-up of each beading tool (1/16\", 1/8\"/>

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