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He Uses Butternut For Wood Carvings

By Lydia Noyes, Contributing Editor

Paul Weaver is an accomplished furniture maker and 3D wood carver whose artwork is displayed at Lehman's Country Store in Kidron, Ohio.

Weaver, who's Amish, has whittled his whole life. He first got serious about woodcarving after attending a one-week carving course where he learned the fundamentals of carving detailed images of people, buildings, clouds, and more with realistic shadowing.

He initially used mahogany wood for his carvings but quickly learned it wasn't suitable for bringing out detail within the wood. Weaver soon switched to butternut and found his carvings came to life. It's been his preference ever since.

Butternut wood is lighter colored than black walnut and it's soft and lightweight. Woodcarvers love it because it gives easily without being brittle and has a beautiful grain pattern. Butternut also allows light and shadows to interact for a visually stunning effect.

For his carvings, Weaver likes to use a block of butternut that's 7-in. thick. This provides ample space for carving detail without the complications that come with cutting deeper.

He'll then glue the picture he wants to carve onto the wood block and carve out the deepest features, such as the sky and

horizon. He'll work his way out to the front, carefully measuring out details, like houses, that need precise proportions in order to look right. Though he has more than 100 chisels at the ready in his studio, he uses medium size chisels for most of his work.

Weaver doesn't draw the images he carves but instead selects art that resonates with him. He tends to favor religious scenes and classic Americana that depicts rural people going about their daily lives. Many have come from his favorite artist, John Sloane.

Weaver works on his carvings for several hours a day, three to five days a week. He estimates that it takes him three months to produce most carvings. Weaver makes furniture for a living and only carves as a hobby, focusing on the scenes he chooses with his wife.

Many of Weaver's carvings are currently displayed at Lehman's County Store in Kidron, Ohio, as well as in his home studio. Lehman's hosts a meet and greet event with Paul Weaver every fourth Saturday of the month. From 9:30-2:30, store visitors can meet with Paul and learn more about the background of his creative process.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Lehman's County Store, 4779 Kidron Rd., Kidron, Ohio 44618 (ph 800-438-5346; www.lehmans.com).

How To Set Up A Farm Stay Operation

Jenn Colby earned four 5-star ratings in a row with her on-farm Airbnb yurt. She says the key is to provide her guests with an experience, not just a place to stay.

"They want to connect to rural life and farming, not just get away in nature," says Colby.

With 25 years of experience working in Extension with the University of Vermont while raising beef, sheep, and hogs on her farm on the side, Colby can provide her guests with what they are looking for.

Recently, she shared her experiences with landowners interested in setting up an on-farm stay in an online class. The class was recorded live and can be accessed via Colby's website. She discussed her multi-year experience renting a fully furnished yurt through Airbnb as well as a more recent experience setting up a Tentrr campsite (Vol. 43, No. 1).

"Working with the public can be scary and is not for everybody," warns Colby. "It takes focus and some thinking."

Colby offered course participants a workbook with a checklist of things to consider, especially time management. She emphasized selecting an online reservation platform to join. These include, but are not limited to, Airbnb, Tentrr, and Hipcamp.



Colby offers an online class about setting up a farm stay operation.

"Find the platform that's right for you," says Colby. "Consider the time you need to commit to the project."

In her case, it was 3 years from concept to completion. That included financing, building, decorating, and testing the product. Planning included both inside and outside spaces, where people will bring groceries or bags and where they will park.

"We shared our vision with friends, and one suggested moving our steps and firepit to create a set of bleachers for people watching the fire," says Colby. "Another with mobility issues suggested a hand railing by the toilet and other small amenities."

Time management is essential, adds Colby.

Making Paper Flowers For Fun And Profit

There's a lot of interest in the art of making paper flowers these days. For anyone interested in starting a side business, Amity Katharine Libby offers a free guide, "Launching a Paper Flower Business", under "Courses" on her website. She offers other courses (many at \$65) that show how to make everything from daisies and buttercups to hydrangeas, roses and calla lilies. In November, she is adding a new series on making paper fruits and vegetables.

Libby was previously a curriculum developer for a botanical garden. Between jobs, pregnant and bored, she discovered an online flower-making tutorial. She purchased \$20 worth of German and Italian crepe paper, made paper peonies, and sold them for \$40. As she made and sold more flowers, she realized her real passion was to educate and empower others to be creative. Through her website, Libby has taught paper flower art to more than 2,000 people from around the world.

She grew up helping her parents with their flower farm and grows peonies on the terraces of her hilly Dixfield, Maine, farm. So, she knows flowers well and how to incorporate botanical realism into her work.

"We've had hummingbirds try to sip from her paper flower sculptures," says Catherine McLetchie, who sells Libby's and other fine artists' work at her gallery, The Good Supply, in Pemaquid, Maine (www.thegoodsupply.org). Libby's most expensive piece has more than 20 blossoms and sells for \$1,650.

Libby sells a few commissioned pieces each year, such as an unconventional wedding bouquet for a writer for an international publication, who chose unusual flowers such as a squash blossom, which would never hold



Photo by Cassie Richards

Libby's online courses show how to make everything from daisies and buttercups to hydrangeas, roses and calla lilies.

up in a flower bouquet. Made with archival paper and stored carefully in the dark, the bouquet will last years for her to display on special occasions.

Some of the artists who take Libby's courses or retain her for creative coaching sell pieces for thousands of dollars, while others run successful sideline cottage businesses. Many simply enjoy making the flowers for their own entertainment.

Libby encourages would-be paper flower artists to check out her free course that covers everything from bookwork and taxes to selling and marketing for a paper flower business.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Amity Katharine Libby, Dixfield, Maine (amity@flowerandjane.com; www.flowerandjane.com).



There are several different sites that list farm and camp rentals.

Buying in bulk eliminates emergency runs to town and saves money. Having multiple sets of linen with an extra set on hand saves time between guests. Keeping extra items at the rental unit allows guests to replace and refill, which Colby says most are glad to do.

A discounted price on her yurt helped cash flow from the beginning. Getting a good rating for her yurt, which encourages more people to reserve, required having lots of guests. Comparatively lower prices encouraged initial guests.

"If you search a platform like Airbnb for places to stay, the ones that come up first are those with lots of good reviews," says Colby. "Once you have lots of stays with really good reviews, you move up in the company's algorithm. Then, you can begin to raise your price."

Getting good reviews is more than having a clean, comfortable place for guests to stay, suggests Colby. "You need to show them you care about them, their families, the reason they are coming to your site, and any

special needs," she says. "Communicate proactively and over-deliver on services and amenities. I provide a welcome basket and above all a handwritten note thanking them for coming."

Once her yurt was up and running successfully, Colby decided to add a Tentrr site. The turnkey package is normally set up by the company, but due to the lack of installers in her area, Colby took on the setup at a discounted price.

While she is still in her first year of operating the Tentrr site, she notes that it also had cash flow from the start. It's that regular income that she feels makes farm stays a good addition to a farming operation.

"I market my lambs once or twice a year and sell pigs twice a year," says Colby. "Farm stays provide cash flow in between."

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