



Manipulating a Gourd with Easy Constraints

From the **Jim Story Manipulated Gourd Committee**

One of the exciting things we read online is that more and more of you are growing your own gourds. That means you are among those who can enter their gourds in AGS-Judged competitions, including the Jim Story Manipulated Gourd competitions. You should know there are two categories and one of them is a gourd that has been constrained (also called molded) during its growth, thereby reshaping it in some way. The sky is the limit for ways to constrain a gourd. I asked a number of growers for examples and advice, and here are some of them.

Celia and Tom Shaneyfelt, as well as Roy Schmidlin, from Tennessee, have used plastic water jugs, glass pickle jars, nylon stockings and mesh bags to name a few. Gourds confined in jars and jugs result in unusual, tight bends. These containers are sacrificed at the end of the growing season when the final gourd is revealed. When a knotted gourd was inserted in a nylon stocking the result was more graceful curves. The graceful curves were also seen when other long-handled dipper gourds were tied inside of plastic grocery bags.

Glenn Burkhalter, formerly from Alabama and **Cecile Garrison**, from California each constrained the ball-end of long-handled dipper gourds in commercially available plastic face molds, with a variety of results. While many were great, some didn't get large enough to fill out the mold and some exceeded the available space. Cecile also has made a number of her own molds, including one made with plaster of paris and a glass human head shape to make a reusable mold.

Phil Moorhead, from Indiana usually constrained growing gourds between two flat plywood plates held together with bolts because he was trying to make flat surfaces (think banjo or paddle). One consideration is to make sure the plywood plates are large enough! "One year I had one grow outside the plates and while it had a flat surface there was with a middle-aged bulge around it. Interesting, but not what I wanted. Using this method, you can use any gourd, but large gourds are not so easy. They exert a lot of pressure."

John Martin, from Ohio has constrained tiny spinner gourds with a string mesh and large Indonesian Bottle gourds with a heavier macrame cord. The netting was placed over the growing gourd and tightening it. If the netting is too loose it doesn't constrict or constrain

the gourd during its growth, so size (ratio) of the full size of netting to the presumed size of the gourd is important to result in constrictions.

Tom Shaneyfelt also hand-carved a cedar mold for a specific purpose – to create a base for a viola. He used long screw clamps to maintain the tension needed to force the transformation. Because Tom's wood molds were placed on gourds that were growing on a trellis, he added heavy duty eye screws to help suspend the gourd in the mold and allow the gourd's handle grow straight.

We hope you will look around your house and find (or make) an object with which you can constrain, transform and manipulate a gourd this year. When you do, visit our web pages and learn more about entering the Jim Story contests at your local gourd society. Visit <https://www.americangourdsociety.org/jim-story-award.html>. Be sure to look at the Galleries on the Jim Story pages too for more inspiration. 🍲



Cecile Garrison and others grew numerous dipper gourds in commercially available plastic "face" molds

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by the AGS
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Committee*



Left: Cecile Garrison made her own form with Plaster of Paris. One time the gourd did not fill out the form, and another time it was too big. When that happened duct tape and eventually a ratchet strap were used to constrain the growth in the form and force the excess to go out through the opening where the stem was placed.

Right: Tom Shaneyfelt split a cedar tree trunk and carved out a space for the body of a string instrument. Long bolts keep the log together as the gourd grows inside and hooks that help suspend it as the Club gourd grows. A lovely viola was the first instrument.



Left: Tom & Celia Shaneyfelt grew gourds in various plastic jugs, bags, stockings and more with fun and interesting results.

Right: John Martin successfully constrained a Spinner gourd and then beaded it; he also successfully applied macrame cord on an Indonesian Bottle gourd as it was growing and it resulted in an amazing design.

