

Working with lowacobb S tabilized Corn Cob Pen Blanks

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Thank you for your purchase from lowacobb. Working with stabilized corn cobs is much easier than working with raw cobs (untreated). However, there are some unique areas that are worth discussing.

Marking the Cob

Wrap masking tape around the center of the cob blank to provide a surface to label the pen blanks and mark the cutline and orientation.

Drilling the cob

Locating the drill bit over the center of the cob and drilling straight through the inner core is probably the most difficult part and also the most important part of working with stabilized cobs. The inner core is solid, but it lacks character and is generally undesirable for it to show in the finished pen. This is why the size of the cob should be matched to the pen size.

The recommended process for drilling the cob blanks is to use a drill press with a pen drilling jig. A self-centering jig type is helpful. The larger end of the cob should be clamped in the jig and the smaller end centered under the bit. Do not hold on to the cob with your fingers as it may cut you if it spins during drilling. Use pliers instead.

Gluing in the tubes

This is the same as wood for the most part. CA glue or epoxy works well. Avoid using polyurethane glue as the foaming action may squirt out through any open voids in the cob and be unsightly in the finished pen.

Squaring the blank

Be careful squaring the cob blank with the end mill as a blow out can occur. Cutting the cob as close as possible to the end of the tube will greatly minimize this risk. Also, a sharp cutter will reduce tear out of the end grain.

Turning

Turning cob blanks is similar to wood, only faster at first when removing the outer layer. Use light cuts until you are comfortable. Use care when near the ends to avoid tear outs. A sharp skew works best, however a gouge will also provide excellent results

Sanding and Polish

Cobs will sand easily and polish well. Avoid buffing or using paper cloth, as the fibers will tend to stick in the kernel voids. Note: this is not a concern if you plan to fill the voids with CA glue.

Finish

In most pens made from cobs, some of the pockets or voids from the kernels of corn will be showing in the finished pen. Here are some options of how to finish depending on what look and feel you want.

Option #1 Leave voids open and finish with friction polish. This is the method I prefer since it is the least time consuming and more importantly it provides a natural look and feel to the pen. Customers can see that it looks like cob and the texture feels like cob.

Option #2 Fill voids with CA glue. This is my least favorite option as the CA glue is messy and take considerable time to cure, unusually requiring multiple filling to completely fill the voids. Once filled, a friction polish or CA finish can be applied.

Option #3 A variation to filling with CA glue is to use sawdust from the cob or a contrasting color (such as red dust from bloodwood, paduak or pink ivory) to fill the voids. Simply crush the sawdust into fine powder by rubbing in your hands and then pack it in the voids. Fill over the top with thin or medium CA. Sand and polish as desired. This will provide a contrasting color pattern. Finish with friction polish or CA. (I do not recommend black color filling as it may be confused with mold on the corn cob).

The finished pen

I hope you have enjoyed working with cob pen blanks and are pleased with your results. If you take pictures, I would be interested in seeing them.

Any questions or comments can be emailed to Tim McGill at pvillepensmith@yahoo.com. If you would like to order more pen blanks, please visit my eBay store Iowacobb Pen Turning Supplies or simply email me. Volume orders may qualify for a discount.

Thanks,
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