

# DRIFTWOOD 101

By Timothy Balda, local wood artist

*Driftwood art is a natural human endeavor.* Found objects, particularly those gathered locally, hold meaning. Using these objects gathered from rivers, streams, lakes, and oceans lets us connect with our surroundings and, in the end, with one another.

## WHERE TO GATHER DRIFTWOOD

- Most public parks allow the gathering of driftwood, but not always. Check the rules BEFORE you remove anything from public lands.
- Federally protected lands, waterways, and estuaries (like Old Woman Creek) have special rules and limitations. Check before removing anything from those areas.
- If you are on private property, first ask permission from the owner.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN YOU GATHER

*Driftwood comes in all shapes and sizes. Tons of driftwood can be found on a beach at any given time.*

What should you look for?

- Colors: Red, green, blue, stripes, variegated brown, any colors that jump out at you. Most driftwood art contains a variety of colors.
- Wild textures: Unusual patterns and weird or strange combinations
- Unusual shapes: The more unusual the shape, the more interesting the final results.
- Inspiration: Ask yourself “What do I see?” If a shape or idea enters your mind, decide if you want to keep that piece. Like looking at clouds, let your mind’s eye be your guide.
- Project requirements: If you have specific shapes, sizes, colors, or textures that you need for a project, pick those up last.

## SAFETY FIRST, CLEANLINESS SECOND

- Wear work/garden gloves while gathering driftwood.
- Gather the driftwood in a bucket or bag to keep it all together. Wash hands thoroughly after gathering. Treat splinters and disinfect cuts right away.
- Do NOT bring fresh driftwood inside. It’s been floating in water and sitting on a beach. It’s damp and dirty.
- Life forms are just waiting to hatch. Leave it all outside in a dry spot.
- Brush off all dirt, sand, and any loose bits. Then thoroughly wash with soap and water. Scrubbing with a stiff brush is highly recommended.
- Options to disinfect/get rid of critters...
  - Wrap clean driftwood in plastic wrap or seal it in a bag, then placed in the freezer for 1-3 days. This kills any ants, mites, or bugs that may be inside.
  - Run clean driftwood through a wash cycle in the dishwasher. Make sure all sand and debris is removed first. Place small pieces in a mesh bag.

[continued]

# ALL WASHED UP

Saturday, August 8, 2020 at Friendship Park

*[continued]*

- Submerge driftwood in a solution of bleach (2 tbs. per gallon of water) or Oxine/oxilic acid (1 tbs. per gallon of water). Both solutions should be handled with care.
- After treatment, driftwood should be left to dry thoroughly.
- Once driftwood is cleaned and disinfected, store it in a clean, dry place like a garage or breezeway. Do not put it back outside or you may need to clean it yet again.

## MAKING DRIFTWOOD MAGIC

*Gathering, cleaning and disinfecting driftwood provides you with a free, safe, raw material you can use to create whatever you imagine.*

- Using basic tools you have around the house, driftwood can be cut, sanded, carved, glued, filed, drilled, nailed, painted, stained, colored, and combined with other materials to create useful household items, fun craft projects, or fine art.
- Experiment, play, create, put it together, take it apart, then put it together again in a new way.
- Given to us by Mother Nature, make it your own.
- THERE ARE NO RULES!!! Just have fun!!

Timothy Balda