



Swede, with his famous knack for humor, acknowledged all the talented Intarsia woodworkers at the meeting who could have been doing his presentation. He then spoke seriously about the wonderful people in our scroll-saw club, saying, “You’ll find a lot of people here who will go out of their way for you and show you everything you need to get started or to improve your craft.”

Both Swede and John got early help from our own Jim Ryan.

Swede has seven years’ experience in Intarsia. He took a two-day class in Forest Lake with his son-in-law, who came home and told Swede’s wife she had to buy a scroll saw. She said, “Do it.” That was his first DeWalt, and he hasn’t stopped sawing and learning since.

John bought his first saw in the 1990s—an old Toro Brand from the 1950s. He could never get it to work. He went to the Canterbury Craft Sale, where Jim Ryan was selling his work. John saw Jim’s pheasant and almost bought it. After talking with John, Jim said, “If you want to do that, [make a pheasant] why don’t you just come on over to my house in Burnsville?” He got John started in 2000.



People usually ask two questions when they first see your work. The first is, “How long did that take you?” And the second is, “Where do you get your patterns?”

Patterns: Famous Intarsia artists have published books of patterns. Talking to them is like talking to your brother or sister. People like Kathy Wise, Judy Gale Roberts, and Garnet Hall will actually spend time with you.

There are also many scroll saw magazines with patterns.

We were cautioned about copyrights on patterns. When you buy a pattern, you can make up to ten reproductions for your own use. If you teach a class you have to get permission to distribute a pattern.

There are probably 50 different ways to apply a pattern to your wood. Some of us are trying to get rid of the messy aerosol spray and use glue sticks or laminators.

Some people apply the pattern directly to the wood. They set up a box and use the spray adhesive on the pattern. Others put various materials like packaging tape (Scotch brand), plastic shelf covering, or painters tape layered between the wood and the pattern. Dirk Boelman puts painters tape down, then glues the pattern on it, then puts packaging tape on top.



Wood Selection: Next people want to know where we get the wood. Of course, most of the woodworking stores sell wood. But here is another benefit to joining a club or association: There are people you meet through our club like Jim Mielke and Leonard Eischens who sell wood. And you talk to people who know where to go beyond the retail stores. Woodcrafters are known for always picking up wood when they travel and meet other woodworkers.

Tip: A good way to learn how to ID wood: Every time you get a new kind of wood, take a small piece and label it. Then create a box labeled *Wood Identification*. Keep putting

those pieces in the box and soon you have a box full of examples of all the exotic and special woods you’ve used in your woodworking. Wet the wood to see what it’ll look like when it’s finished.

Blade selection: Here the discussion centered on blade sizes that are good for Intarsia. It depends on the hardness and the thickness of the wood you're cutting. A #9 blade is huge. Swede calls them chain saws. But sometimes that's what you need. For example, Wenge is a very hard wood. Swede tried a #5, a #7, and ended up using a #9. Both John and Swede recommend you play around with different blades and take notes. John suggested the #5 is the most universal. But when pieces have to fit, a #3 or #2 might be better.

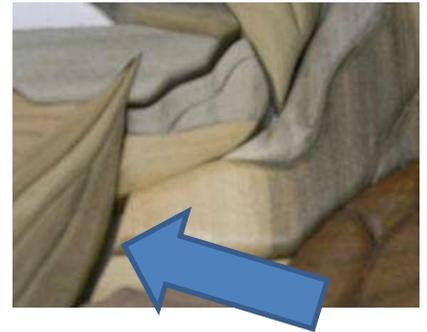


When pieces don't fit: How to make pieces fit is one of the most important issues. You're going to have this problem from time to time. The first step is improving your cutting skills. When pieces of two different woods go side by side, John uses the same pattern to cut both pieces.

After cutting the first piece, he picks up the pattern and sticks it to the second piece of wood. He then uses the edge of the pattern as the new cut line, which if followed carefully, will give a really good fit.

On John's eagle, he shaped the feathers in groups before cutting them. He cut a group of feathers, took the pattern off, shaped it, and then put the pattern back on to cut the rest of the feathers. He does groups of three, four, or five feathers for birds. You have to make the last feather a little bigger to compensate for blade size and corrections, but this method helps limit the size.

High Spots: If you can stick a credit card between two pieces, it's too wide a space according to Garnet Hall. You may have to either cut a new piece or sand it to fit. Another method to reduce a high spot is to use the scroll saw as follows. Grab a new smaller blade, reduce the saw speed way down. Hold the two pieces together loosely and saw between the two pieces a few times both ways. You have to be careful though; we've all had catastrophes fixing the cut this way. If you cut into one piece the wrong way, it's ruined; and you have to cut a new piece. If you cut too much away, then the next piece doesn't fit and you have to cut a new piece.



Sanding: Many Intarsia artists feel that sanding is where the real art is created. Start with 3/4" piece of wood and sand a lot. Judy goes down to almost 1/8" in some places. That allows for real contour, roundness, and gradually fading lines. She says most people don't take enough wood off.

Start by sanding to the lowest spot of your project and progress from there. Judy has an article on her website that describes her use of sanding shims. She sands groups of pieces together as one unit. For example, she says, "When I shape the pieces, my goal is to make it look as real as possible. For example if I were sanding a horse with a white blaze, a color change on the coat does not mean the contour changes. After the parts are sanded they are removed from the sanding shim, and I hand sand a very slight bevel around the edges of the parts." She also uses sanding shims to blend in raised areas. "When two raising shims are placed under the nose area to add more dimension, I would need to blend in the parts so it didn't look like it had a stair-step shaped nose."



Large pneumatic or foam sanding drums



Small pneumatic sanding drums

Most Intarsia artists have several sanding devices in their shop or work area. They use machine sanding, hand sanding, and filing techniques. The pneumatic sanding drums are inflatable and a favorite of John's. The large ones are available from Grizzly machines. Klingspore sells the smaller drums and the sanding mop. Judy Gale Roberts sells small pneumatic drums, foam drum sleeves, and the Wonder Wheel.

The flexible drums allow you to shape the wood with smoother lines and curves. The Wonder Wheel is used to give your piece texture, such as for the fur of a chipmunk or beaver. Judy sells it with the sharpening device to sand the wheel to a sharp edge. It takes some practice to get it right.



Sanding drum on drill press

Grinder with Foam drum sleeve
And Wonder Wheel

Sanding mop on drill press

John says he doesn't do any projects without finishing the sanding with the sanding mop on a drill press. You have to wear gloves when you use it to prevent lots of skin scrapes. The mop gives each piece a very nice, smooth finish and gets rid of the swirlies.

Sanding bows are sanding sticks made by gluing sandpaper on tongue depressors or paint stir sticks. Some people also use emery boards (nail files).

The final item is a set of files: There are a dozen or more different shapes perfect for shaping odd corners and intersections; for example, round, flat, half moon, and triangles. You can buy them at the Northern Hydraulic bargain table. They are inexpensive and good enough for wood.

Finishing: Old school is best. Finish each piece separately. For the first coat, do all sides except the bottom. Go to Klockit.com, or AMAZON for Bartley's gel stain. You can use spray for the second and many more coats.

Swede uses one coat of white gel stain on basswood or aspen to keep it white. If you rub it in and rub it off, the grain shows through. Use for any white wood. The second and third coats use a clear finish. **Tip:** If you want walnut to turn black, you can treat it with a solution that results from soaking steel wool in vinegar for a few days.



Backer Boards: Backer boards are the boards that you glue your pieces to. You can use 1/8-inch or 1/4-inch balted birch or masonite, which is a little easier to work with. Masonite or hard board is cheaper and easier to round the back. You can get 4 x 8 sheets of it.

Glue: A thousand or more glues are out there. Michaels sells Sobo glue, which dries clear. Kathy Wise recommends using silicon. With silicon you can move the pieces around before drying to make sure they fit as tightly as you want. Titebond is a liquid hide glue. It works on something that has been glued before. Then there is

contact cement, Well-Bond, and CA glues, among others.

When you're done, sign your piece! It's also a good idea to list the wood used for your project. Some people say you should credit the author of the pattern, but that's optional. Most knowledgeable artists say don't number or date your pieces in a way that might be interpreted as "old is bad." Number your work only if you can explain what it means. And date it after you sell it.

Both Swede and John have open shops. They invite you to come over and try out tools or new ideas. Thanks to both of you for an animated, exciting discussion of Intarsia.