

Basic Pyrography

The one most important advice I can give you is to enjoy exploring how far you can push the limits of this art form. Have a look on the web at www.suewalters.com Inspiration plus all the information you will ever need. Subscribe to her free newsletter and print off all her hints and tips – you will be well on your way by just doing that. Put in a search for Pyrography – there is a lot more out there than I ever imagined when I started burning.

SAFETY TIPS:

HEAT. Tips and wires get very hot. The combination can cut through you quicker than through wood (the only advantage is that you will cauterize the cut and minimize bleeding). ALWAYS TURN OFF when not in use (unplug as well if children around) or while changing tips. Be careful when others around – somehow if it's hot or sharp, it is a magnet to some people. Always keep your electrical leads away from the hot tips.

SMOKE. Generally there is little or no smoke unless you are doing a deep burn. A fan or slight breeze from a window can help for the time required, but don't forget this will affect the temperature of your nib.

VAPOURS. This brings us to **WHAT NOT TO BURN** - MDF, particle board, chip board or craftwood – NEVER BURN ON THIS – highly toxic – cancer causing.

PREPARED WOOD – e.g. pre varnished, waxed or treated in any way – toxic.

PRE-PAINTED WOOD – not wise as paints, (even acrylics) can be toxic when heated.

PERSPEX – fumes can be toxic.

Some woods can cause allergies to some people – I guess that's the poor side of "Thank goodness we aren't all the same" so the best rule of thumb is, if as you burn, there is a strong odour, or you sense some reaction, then don't take the risk.

WHAT TO BURN ON

OK – so what does that leave us to burn on – look for as light coloured timber as possible with few grain lines.

WOOD

Most of my burning is done on Hoop Pine Ply (but don't burn deeply and go into the glue layer) and Jacaranda. If you can obtain Bass Wood from the States – this is wonderful. While Pine is readily available it can be very difficult due to the many grain lines which will not burn as dark or as deep as the rest of the wood.

OTHER

LEATHER – must be vegetable tanned leather – no other is suitable. Those fumes again.

PAPER – Use art paper high in cotton content – 200SM or higher. Matting boards used in picture framing are also suitable.

COW HORNS – I have done many of these for the black powder shooting club. Hard to come by and not too nice in the aroma department, but very rewarding.

Traditionally Pyrography should be done in monotone (more difficult but so rewarding) however, some colour can be introduced by using very watered down acrylic paints, and oil based pastels.

As a sealer I use Cabots Crystal Clear to brush on, or Wattyl Stylwood Spray Laquer.