

Casting & Stabilization Resources

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The following resources are related to the use of stabilizing resin (such as Cactus Juice or Stickfast Resin) and Alumalite casting resin. There are other products out there as well, but these are the ones we primarily use.

YouTube

Zag Higgins (NV Woodwerks) - <https://www.youtube.com/user/NVWoodwerks> - lots of good videos and generally reliable information.

TurnTex (Curtis Seebeck) - <https://www.youtube.com/user/TurnTex> - not as many videos, but these are from Curtis, who is the go-to guy with C&S questions.

Doctor's Woodshop (Mike Meredith) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATPL2DadXp0> – most of his videos are about his finishing products, but he does have a good video about casting (that's what the link goes to).

Alumilite Mold Making & Casting Materials - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjEL94r6U8mL6Oo5Ph6NEtw> - get it from the horse's mouth.

Nick Zametti - <https://www.nickzametti.com> and YouTube – Nick is a woodturner in New Zealand with more than 100 videos on YouTube, covering a very wide variety of topics, with a significant focus on casting (some of it pretty off-beat: ketchup? Shaving cream and food dye?) – some good information, might be inspirational, certainly entertaining

Facebook

TurnTex, LLC Customer Connection – an excellent resource moderated by Curtis Seebeck, who generally responds very quickly to questions.

Vendors

TurnTex Stabilization and Casting Solutions: <https://www.turntex.com/> - sells pretty much everything you need for dyeing, stabilization and casting

Conestoga Works: <https://conestogaworks.com/chambers.html> - sells vacuum chambers (that look a lot like Curtis'), pumps and Cactus Juice.

Best Value Vacs: <https://shopbv.com/> - sells vacuum pots – direct or via Amazon

Turner's Warehouse: <https://www.turnerswarehouse.com/collections> - primarily of interest for their molds

Craft Supplies: <https://www.woodturnerscatalog.com/> - sells a variety of brands and items.

NV Woodwerks - <https://nvwoodwerks.com/> - Zac Higgins website. Lots of good info, including videos, lists and links of the videos he uses, reviews of products, etc.

Frugal Vacuum Chuck: <https://www.frugalvacuumchuck.com/> - vacuum chucking kits (including pumps which can also be used for dyeing and stabilization)

JT Turning Tools - <https://jtturningtools.com/> - another source for vacuum pumps, vacuum spindle adapters, parts for DIY vacuum chucks and hardware for vacuum chucking; Andy has been using their spindle adapter and vacuum system hardware kit (<https://jtturningtools.com/vacuumpumps-kits#hardwarekit>) for some years and is very happy with it.

Joe Woodworker: <https://www.ioewoodworker.com/> - primarily a veneer supplier, but sells vacuum presses and parts which can be used for dyeing and stabilization.

Local Resources:

Woodcraft and Rockler both have some casting and stabilization supplies. There are also a lot of other brands of 2 part resin that people use that can work well, often offering longer open times than Alupalite.

Interstate Plastics and Tapp Plastics both have scrap bins where you can get scrap plastic for much less than list price. HPDE (high density polyethylene) is good for molds, other plastics can be used to make your own vacuum chambers – just be sure the plastic you choose is correct (type, thickness, etc.) for the size chamber you are building. You can also order from Amazon (more expensive), or buy pre-made molds from Craft Supplies and other places.

Note: for pressure pots to use for casting, Curtis recommends Binks, which are tested and certified for the stated pressures. They are expensive. Many people use converted Harbor Freight paint pots (or converted paint pots from other sources). I use a California Air Tools 365B 5-Gallon Pressure Pot which is less expensive but seems to be good quality (Curtis used one in Oregon and was positive about it).

Dyeing vs Stabilizing vs Casting. At the Sawdust Session, Andy demonstrated the use of TransTint dyes diluted in DNA (Denatured Alcohol) under vacuum to dye blanks without stabilizing. Tim showed the results of using Cactus Juice with dyes under vacuum to stabilize and dye at the same time. If your wood is not punky, brittle, etc., you do not need to stabilize – and the resultant blank will turn and finish like wood, not plastic. If you stabilize, you end up with a blank that must be handled like a plastic pen blank –i.e., you'll most likely spend more time finishing it.

Where to get your questions answered

If you can't find an answer on the TurnTex FAQ page, then the best place to ask a question is the Turntex forum above. If you are not a Facebook user, you can try pinging Zac Higgins (NV Woodwerks above). Also check out the International Association of Penturners webpage, a great resource – their subforum on casting and stabilization alone is a rich source of information for materials and processes as applied to casting and stabilizing smaller items (pen blanks) – more than 5000 threads spanning more than 14 years: <https://www.penturners.org/forums/casting-stabilization.43/>

CAUTION: Using pressure pots and vacuum chambers can be dangerous – be aware of stated limitations from manufacturers, and realize that whenever you modify something, you are at risk. Use the safety tool between your ears before you do anything!