

Decorating Gourds

By *Nancy Norris*

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There are many ways to enhance your gourd with color. I will mention several methods in which you can 'paint' gourds. I hesitate to use the word paint as many people think it has to be something with a brush, such as oils or acrylics. This is not the case. The options for decorating a gourd are limitless. If you are a beginner, I would suggest taking a workshop offered at gourd shows or purchasing a book at a craft store. There are many books that focus on painting on a gourd.

The most important thing to do prior to decorating is to have a dry and clean gourd. Do not attempt to 'paint' on a gourd that is still green from the vine. Make sure all the dirt and mold has been cleaned from the gourd. Cleaning a gourd is an entirely different subject, and I will not explain the cleaning process here. You can find literature on this subject at gourd events, or in gourd newsletters, or on the internet.

Painting on a gourd can be defined in many ways: oil paints, acrylic paints, watercolors, magic markers, pen and ink, leather dye, shoe dye, colored pencils, pastels and others. I have experimented with all and that is what I would suggest to you. Combining techniques is a good way to learn what effect you like best.

As an artist working with gourds, handle them in the same way you would work on canvas, wood, masonite, watercolor paper, etc. I personally do not do any prep-work on my gourds. I start with a clean gourd and either sketch my design or freehand it with the medium of choice. I find no reason to seal, base coat, or to use gesso prior to beginning my design, but some folks do. However, if you have a desired effect that would call for one of these basing mediums, then by all means, do it on the gourd as well.

I do recommend using a sealant once your gourd artwork is complete and dried. This might be different than what you are used to. For example, if your artistic field has been canvas oil painting, perhaps you have never sealed a canvas. A gourd is something that will most likely be picked up, handled a lot or maybe it is decorated for a holiday and is stored away for the year, all of which are good reasons to use a spray or brush-on sealant. There are many varieties of sealants to choose from. Use something that is compatible with your choice of medium.

You will be creating a piece of art that will be enjoyed for many generations. If you preserve it properly, there will be no problems. I would encourage you to try different mediums, combine mediums, take classes, and most of all, attend gourd shows to learn all the new and exciting things that can be done with gourd art.