

Carving Tulips



Relief carving that looks stunning painted or in natural wood

By Betty Padden

These beautiful tulips are easy to carve and help you work on perspective and creating depth in thin wood. For painting instructions, see *Woodcarving Illustrated* Spring 2014 (Issue 66).



Preparing the Blank

Glue together the blank. I use pine. The final size should be 1 3/4" x 8 3/4" x 14" (44mm x 222mm x 356mm). Trace the pattern onto the blank, and use a router or hand tools to lower the background around the flowers 1" (25mm). Be careful to leave the frame. Use hand tools to clean up the edges and corners where the router will not reach. Cut the outer perimeter of the carving and sand the sides smooth. Number the leaves according to the pattern. Remove about 3/8" (10mm) from the entire frame, and remove an additional 1/8" (3mm), to remove a total of 1/2" (13mm) from the frame under the Leaves #3.

TULIPS: CARVING THE LEAVES



1

Carve the leaves. Start with Leaf 1. Use a 1/4" (6mm) 45° V-tool to carve a groove between Leaf 1 and Leaf 2. Remove about 1/2" (13mm) of wood from leaf 1. Roll or curve the leaf slightly toward the tip and round and down the bottom of the leaf to tuck it below Leaf 2. The base of Leaf 1 will be about 1/8" (3mm) higher than the background. Reduce the thickness of Leaf 2 by 1/2" (13mm) and shape it the same way you shaped Leaf 1. For the two Leaf 3 parts, cut along the line separating the leaf from the base. Bevel each leaf down towards the tulip so it looks like they are coming out from under the flower. The point where the leaf meets the flower will be between 5/8" (16mm) and 3/4" (19mm) deep. Roll tips of leaves down slightly. I use a 9/16" (14mm) #7 gouge to put in a few "waves" in the leaves as well. Drop area marked 4 down 3/4" (19mm).

TIPS

CARVING THICK AND THIN ELEMENTS

When carving thin objects, such as leaves and flower petals, never round the edges. Keeping the edges sharp adds to the illusion that they are flat or thin. Leaves can undulate from stem to tip, but the edges should never be round. Conversely, objects that have thickness, such as the bowl of the flower, need to be rounded to look full and thick.

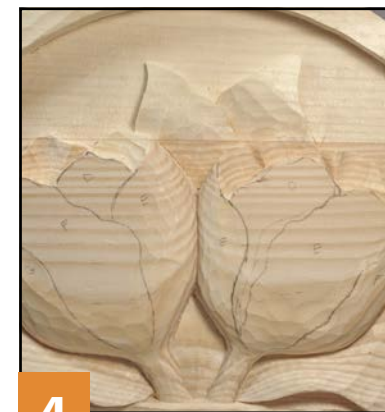
CURVING SEPARATIONS

Use a gouge to separate areas that curve down from each other, such as the flower stem. A hard stop cut made with a skew chisel, knife, or V-tool should only be used to cut apart two separate items, such as leaves #1 and #2.



2

Carve the flower stems. Use a 3/8" (10mm) #9 gouge to separate the stem from the tulip. Do not use a V-tool. Drop the stems down to about 1/8" (3mm) above the leaf. Round the sides of the stems with a 7/16" (12mm) #5 gouge.

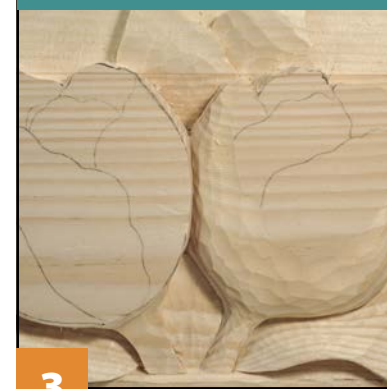


4

Carve Petals A and B. Use the 1/4" (6mm) 45° V-tool to make a stop cut around the A petals. Carve these petals down 1/2" (13mm) and then bevel and scoop them slightly in towards the flower as show in the photo. Then, use the same tool to make stop cuts around Petal B, remove 1/2" (13mm), shape it similar to Petals A, and tuck the edges of Petal B under Petal A where they intersect. Then, make stop cuts along the lines where C intersects with Petals D, E, and F (the lines you highlighted in Step 3). Use a 9/16" (14mm) #7 gouge to start your cut at the top of C and scoop down to the stop cut. Use a 3/8" (10mm) #9 gouge in the tighter areas.



TULIPS: CARVING THE TULIPS



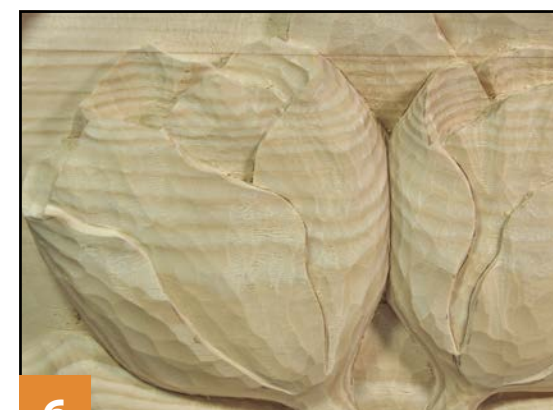
3

Start carving the tulip. Begin by separating the two tulips with a stop cut, and then round the lower portion of the flowers. Envision a teacup shape. Repeat the process on the other tulip. Redraw any petal lines carved away and label the petals using the pattern as a guide. Highlight the areas separating the areas marked C from the other petals.



5

Carve Petals D. Make stop cuts along the edges of Petals D where they touch the edges of other petals. Starting at the center of the petal, round the petal from side to side slightly to the stop cuts to remove a little over 1/8" (3mm) where they meet other petals. I use a 5/32" (7mm) #11 veiner to add ripples in petals. Cut first in the direction marked on the pattern and round the sides of the groove to soften the ripple.



6

Carve the remaining petals. Use the same technique explained in Step 5 to carve the remaining petals.



7

Clean up the carving. Use a 7/16" (12mm) skew chisel to make a stop cut around the tulips, leaves, and frame where they meet the background. Use a 13/16" (20mm) #3 fishtail gouge to clean up the background to the stop cuts. The #3 gouge gives the background a hand-tooled look.

materials & tools

MATERIALS:

- Carving wood such as pine or basswood, 1 3/4" (44mm)-thick: 8 3/4" x 14" (222mm x 356m)

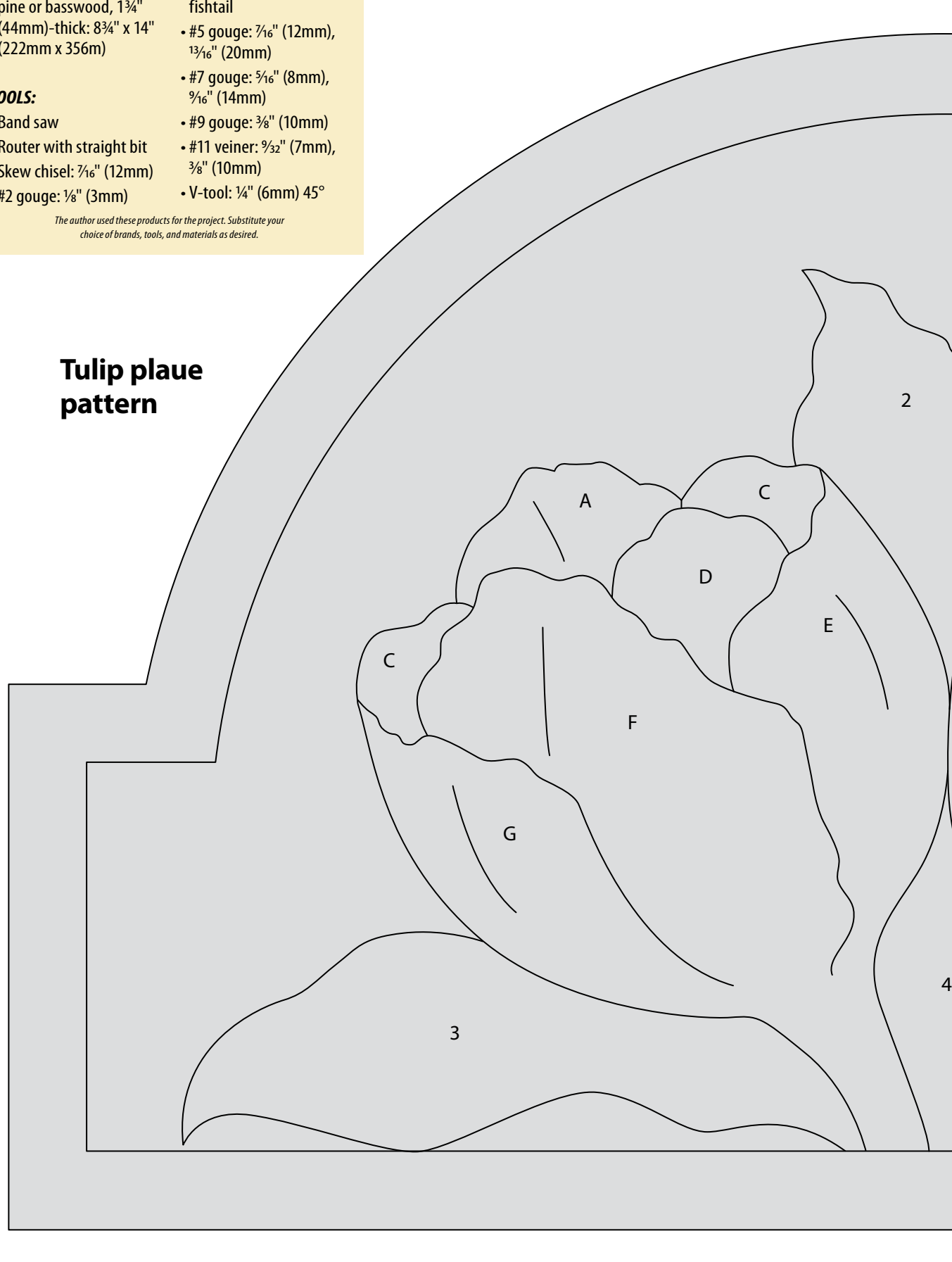
TOOLS:

- Band saw
- Router with straight bit
- Skew chisel: 7/16" (12mm)
- #2 gouge: 1/8" (3mm)

- #3 gouge: 13/16" (20mm) fishtail
- #5 gouge: 7/16" (12mm), 13/16" (20mm)
- #7 gouge: 5/16" (8mm), 9/16" (14mm)
- #9 gouge: 3/8" (10mm)
- #11 veiner: 9/32" (7mm), 3/8" (10mm)
- V-tool: 1/4" (6mm) 45°

The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.

Tulip plaue pattern



Betty Padden and her husband, Bob, own the Wooden Apple Signmakers in Auburn, Mass., and have been professional sign carvers for 35 years. They have been teaching their craft to students in their studio for more than 30 years. In addition, they created SantaCarls®, a unique figure that has been sold at Disney parks and Busch Gardens. Betty also designs and paints for Ne'Qwa Art and Blossom Bucket, among other companies. See more of Betty's work at www.WoodenAppleSignmakers.com.

