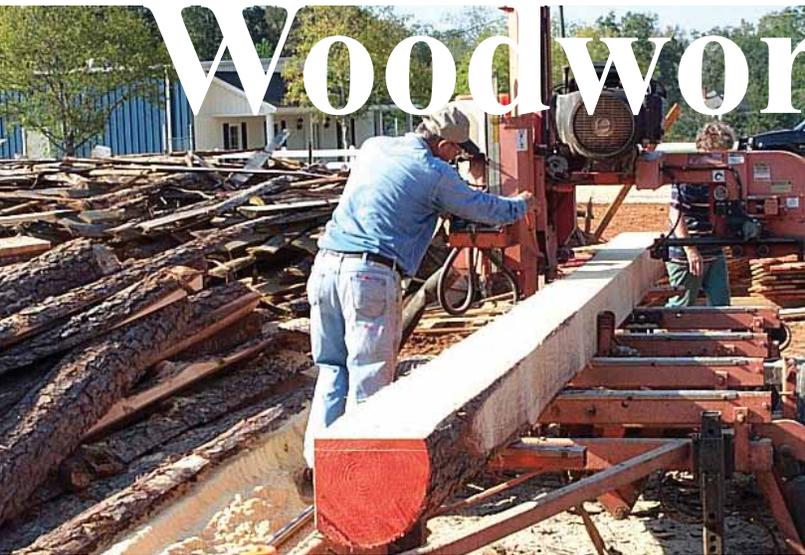




# From the Stump to the Woodworking Shop



*By Tim Albritton, State Staff Forester  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
with Walter Albritton*

**M**y Dad and I have found great joy in making something with our own hands – especially something made of wood. It does not matter whether it's a wooden bowl, a stool, a "Lazy Susan" turntable, a bench, or a set of Adirondack chairs. We just enjoy using our God-given creativity to make things. And the joy goes up a notch when the object being created can be made from a tree harvested from our own land.

As a long-time forester I have met a lot of people who share this joy. Many friends who are TREASURE Forest landowners

in Alabama have been claiming this fun for years. Every time I meet one of them and see what they are doing, I want to go straight home and try it myself. Talented woodworkers inspire me!

Barnett King of Crenshaw County is a true woodworking handyman if there ever was one. He has been making things for years, usually from trees that have been blown down in a storm. Such trees are often pushed out of the way and wasted by a lazy man, but Barnett sees potential in a red oak tree blown down in a

storm. He gets the tree sawn into lumber and begins making things.

Dr. Robert Parker of Elmore County is a wooden bowl-making artist. He has made wooden bowls out of so many different species, you would hardly believe it. Each one has its own unique grain pattern, shape, and color. His presentation on how to make bowls at one of the TREASURE Forest conferences remains the best talk I have ever heard. When you watch Dr. Parker making a bowl, you realize you are watching a “Master” at work.

Roy Jordan of Marengo County has been a landowner and a leader in the TREASURE Forest movement in Alabama for many years. He and my Dad met when they were students at Auburn University, and they have been close friends ever since. Dad was even Roy’s pastor for several years in Demopolis. Once while visiting, Dad admired two large pieces of black walnut Roy had tossed aside in a barn. My Dad immediately “envisioned” two lovely end tables in that wood. I later turned Roy’s kind gift to my Dad into the two end tables that now attract attention in the great room of his home in Elmore County.

Often times a tree will have significant history behind it and that makes the project even more special. My grandmother planted some cedar trees in her front yard when my father was born in 1932. Over fifty years later the cedars were badly damaged by a storm and needed to come down. A friend from Marbury come over and sawed the cedar logs into lumber. Later, with the help of a master carpenter,

*“In your workshop, an old piece of wood could become a useful thing of beauty!”*



*Crenshaw County TREASURE Forest landowner Barnett King, busy in his woodworking shop, sees potential in trees that have been blown down in storms.*

my Dad used this cedar to make four beautiful cedar chests – one for each of his four daughters-in-law. Each chest was a memorable Christmas gift.

If you are fortunate enough to own a portable sawmill or live near someone who does, then you have some real opportunities to allow the creative juices to flow. My brother and I recently had a black walnut tree sawn into lumber that had been blown down in the storms of 2012. A relative of ours who owns a sawmill in our neighborhood, Randy Berkstresser, cut the tree into lumber. We saved money by allowing half the lumber to be his pay. After the lumber dried for a spell, I made a sitting bench out of some of the wood; my brother, Steve, is using the rest to make a custom bench top in his home. Black walnut makes beautiful furniture.

Using vine-curved saplings from my property, I have been making walking sticks  
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*Using vine-curved saplings from his property, the author has been fashioning unique walking sticks for several years. Tree species from which these sticks were made include (left to right): black cherry, green ash with a black walnut handle, green ash, and privet.*



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sticks for years. These saplings may seem insignificant when you walk past them in the woods, but that is where imagination can take over. Cut one down, skin off the bark, begin sanding it down, and soon you may have a handsome walking stick in your hands.

Hopefully these ideas we have shared will encourage you to think creatively about the timber resources God has blessed you with on your TREASURE Forest. Wisely using what you have is good stewardship. If a tree falls because of a storm, old age, or is just left behind from a logging job, think of ways to redeem it. Release the power of your imagination. In your workshop, an old piece of wood could become a useful thing of beauty!



Photos by Hannah Albritton

*Master artisan and Elmore County TREASURE Forest landowner Dr. Robert Parker recognizes that every wooden bowl has its own distinctive grain pattern, shape, and color.*



*After allowing time for the lumber to dry, Albritton, his father Walter, and brother Steve have made beautiful furniture such as Adirondack chairs from pine (left), tables from black walnut (left), and custom benches also from black walnut (below left and right) as well as red oak (below center).*

