

Tree Fern Vase



Drawings from A Book of Ferns by Greta Stevenson

Of the many tree fern species in New Zealand the Mamaku and Ponga (Silver Fern) can be turned on a lathe to make nicely patterned vases and pots. These two have thick leaf bases and thick hard parts to the trunk. Others, like the Wheki, have slim leaf bases and a very small centre to the trunk.



Cut a length of your choice from the log. The diameter of the core is similar throughout. This core is hard black material around a soft cream centre. Cut two disks of wood that will rest on the inner areas of the black parts of the core. Use short nails to secure these to each end of the log.

Check the internal diameter of the largest deep-jawed chuck you have. The chuck will need to grip the black part of the core or a little of the material outside that.



Mount the work between centres and turn off the rough outside. Keep the end you intend to hold in the chuck at 10mm greater diameter than the chuck size. Continue to turn the remainder of the work thinner. When the first white leaf attachment centre is seen, stop and check. Lift or lower the ends of the work to get the most even cut around the log.



Complete cutting the spigot to the size required for your chuck. Mount the work in the chuck.



Turn the work to the shape of your choice. Use only sharp chisels. No sanding. Hollow it using as large a Forstner bit as possible. If you want the finished item to have a bottom in it, leave about 20mm thickness and hope it does not shrink away as it dries. The inside may now be blackened by the drill. Clean this if possible.



Part it off. Use a parting tool only through the outer hard shell then saw the centre core. Sand the bottom after it is dry.

