



# Bring Home a Garden Gnome

**Make a mascot that's  
sure to bring good luck**

*By Floyd Rhadigan*

**S**mall, strong, gentle, and quick, gnomes live in harmony with nature while also enjoying a good practical joke. They live in farmlands, forests, meadows, houses, and, like this one, gardens. These cheery folk are vegetarians, and occasionally enjoy a taste of mead or spiced gin. Having gnomes in your home or garden is generally considered to be very good luck.

To start, cut both profiles on a band saw and then remove the excess wood using your choice of tools. Use the pattern as a guide to draw the major landmarks, such as the ears, arms, and legs. I started with a roughout and used a  $\frac{3}{8}$ " (10mm) #9 gouge to carve away excess wood from the mushroom to leave more room for the legs and arms.



## GNOME: ROUGHING OUT THE PROJECT



**1** **Start carving the ears.** The back of the ear looks like a backward C. Use a knife to make a deep stop cut along the back of the ear. Carve to the stop cut to separate the ear from the head. Carve from the back of the ear to the bridge of the nose with a  $\frac{3}{8}$ " (10mm) #7 gouge to make the face triangular. Draw a centerline on the nose.



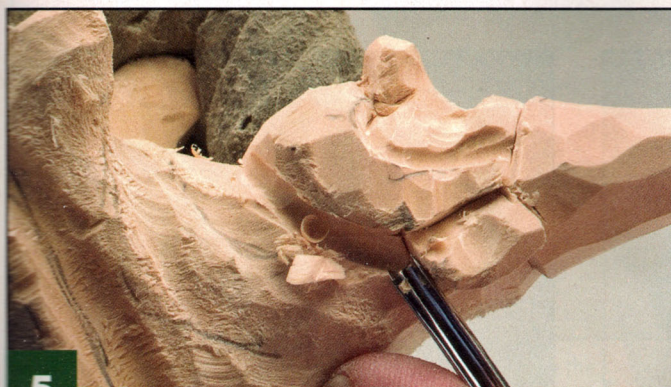
**2** **Establish the brow line and the bottom of the nose.** Use a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " (5mm) 45° V-tool to carve along the line between the hat and the face/hairline. Use a knife to remove wood from the face to separate the face from the hat. Draw the brow and the bottom of the nose. Use a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6mm) #9 gouge to carve across the brow line and along both sides of the nose.



**3** **Finish roughing out the nose.** Use a knife to make a stop cut along the bottom of the nose (the septum). Rotate the knife 30° from center on both sides and cut angles on the sides of the nose to create triangles. Stab a  $\frac{3}{8}$ " (10mm) #7 gouge into the point of each triangle and carve up to the cut to create the outside flanges of the nose. Use a knife to remove a sliver of wood from behind the nostril.



**4** **Separate the face.** With a knife, make a stop cut along the chin. Carve up to it to separate the chin and neck. Draw the hook-shaped cheek lines, ending at the nostril tips. Carve along them with a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " (5mm) #9 gouge to create a smooth transition between the face and the hair. Make a stop cut with a knife where the cheek meets the mustache, and carve up to the stop cut to create a strong separation.



**5** **Refine the ear and jaw line.** Make a stop cut along the back of the sideburn and carve up to it to separate the ear from the sideburn. Carve along the jaw line from the bottom of the ear to the chin with a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " (5mm) #9 gouge. With a knife, flatten the tops of the shoulders back to the sides of the neck.

## GNOME: CARVING THE EARS AND EYES



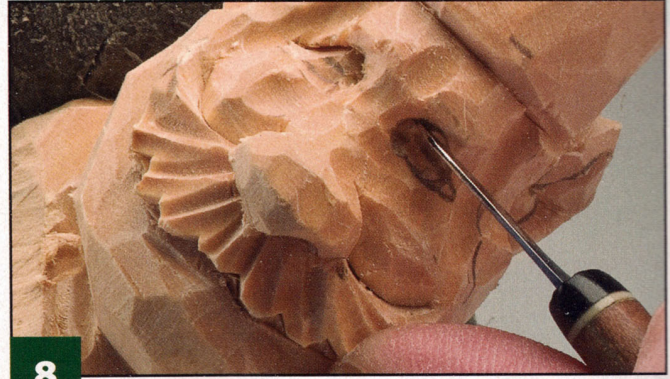
**6** **Draw the features.** Draw the centers of the eyes, the insides of the ears, and the mustache. Carve along the bottom of the mustache with a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " (5mm) 45° V-tool. Deepen this cut with a knife to create a shadow. Use a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " (5mm) #9 gouge to texture the mustache. Use a  $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) micro V-tool to carve divots in the edge of the mustache, and use the V-tool to deepen the gouge grooves in the mustache.





7

**Carve the ear.** Make a stop cut with a  $\frac{5}{32}$ " (4mm) micro gouge along the tragus (the pointed cartilage in the ear). Carve up to the stop cut with a detail knife to shape the inside of the ear. Extend the stop cut along the top of the inside of the ear, and then carve up to the stop cut to finish the ear. Repeat for the other ear.



8

**Carve the eyes.** Use a  $\frac{1}{16}$ " (2mm) micro gouge to carve along the nose and deepen the inside corners of the eyes. Draw the eyelids. Make a stop cut along one top eyelid and then carve to the stop cut to separate the top eyelid from the eyeball. Use the same technique to separate the bottom eyelid from the eyeball. The deeper you cut in the corners, the rounder the eyeball will be. Repeat for the second eye.

### GNOME: CARVING THE BODY



9

**Finish carving the eyes.** Carve a slight groove between the top eyelids and the brow with a  $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) 45° V-tool. Use the same tool to carve under the bottom eyelids to make the lower eye areas look a little puffy.



10

**Isolate the arms.** Use a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6mm) 45° V-tool to carve along the arm lines. Deepen the cuts with a knife, and then carve to these cuts to separate the arms from the body and legs. With a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " (5mm) #9 gouge, carve the wrinkles where the elbows bend. Make stop cuts along the cuffs with a knife. Carve to the stop cuts to separate the hands from the cuffs. Make a stop cut along the top of the fingers and carve up to it to separate the two hands. Then, carve the visible thumb.



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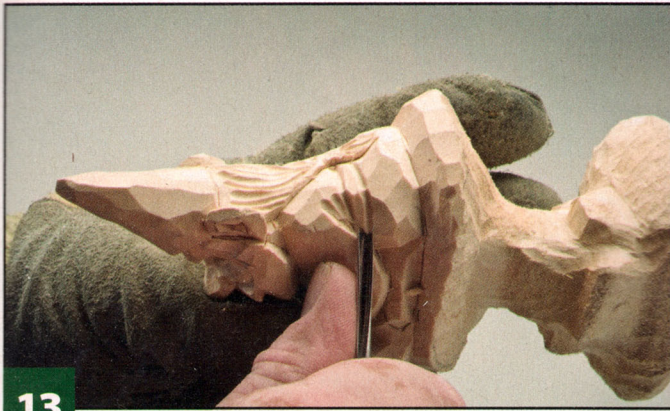
**Carve the ponytail.** Draw the ponytail and use a knife to make stop cuts along the line. Carve up to the stop cuts to separate the ponytail from the back. Carve the hair texture with a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " (5mm) #9 gouge. Use a detail knife to add the ponytail holder. Then, deepen the hair texture with a  $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) 45° V-tool.



12

**Carve the feet and legs.** Use a knife to make a stop cut between the legs and rump and the mushroom on each side. Round the legs and feet down into the stop cuts. Remove the saw marks from the top of the mushroom.

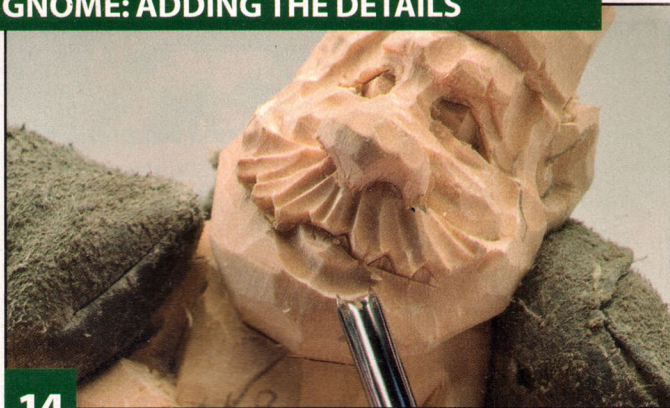




13

**Carve the tunic.** Draw the tunic and make stop cuts along the lines with a knife. Carve up to the stop cuts to separate the legs from the tunic. Carve along the belt with a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " (5mm) V-tool.

## GNOME: ADDING THE DETAILS



14

**Carve the mouth and beard.** Use a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " (5mm) #9 gouge to carve under the lower lip to separate the lip from the beard. Carve the beard texture with the same gouge. Do not carve any straight lines. Add more texture with the  $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) 45° V-tool.



15

**Add the tunic details.** Draw the opening in the tunic and the button. Make a stop cut along the opening and carve up to it to separate the tunic. Use a  $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) micro gouge to make a stop cut along the button and carve up to it with a  $\frac{3}{32}$ " (4mm) micro gouge to separate the button from the rest of the tunic. Separate the fingers with a detail knife.



16

**Shape the mushroom.** Use a detail knife to shape the bottom of the mushroom. Make stop cuts around the leaf details and carve up to them to separate the mushroom stalk from the ground. Remove the saw marks from the base. Use a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " (5mm) V-tool to add grass texture. The goal is to break up the solid wood.



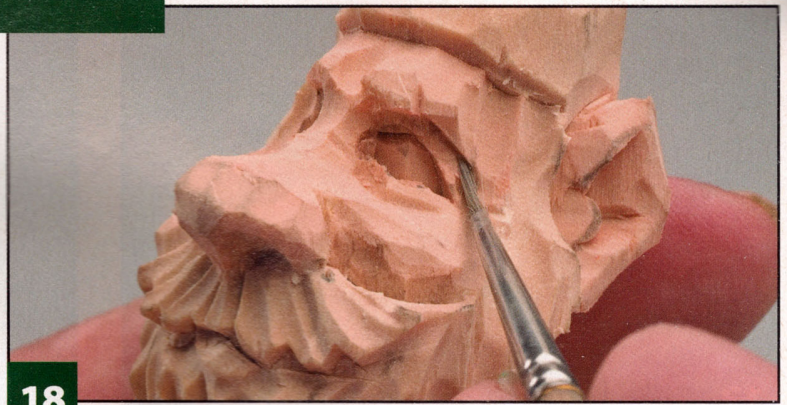
17

**Add the details to the bottom of the mushroom.** Carve along the bottom of the mushroom with the  $\frac{3}{16}$ " (5mm) V-tool to separate the top of the mushroom from the fins, and then carve the fins on the bottom of the mushroom. Stop-cut along the area where the stalk meets the fins and carve up to the stop cuts to separate the stalk from the fins. Also, draw the line separating the sole from the top of the boot. Carve along the line with a  $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) 45° V-tool.



## GNOME: PAINTING THE CARVING

Scrub the carving with hot water, dish soap, and a denture brush. Allow it to dry and then seal it with a coat of Krylon matte finish. Mix 1 drop of paint with 15 to 20 drops of water. Mix well to make sure the pigment is dissolved. Start with the light colors first; it's easier to cover up a mistake with a light color than a dark color. You can buy inexpensive paint, but use the best brushes you can afford.



18

**Paint the face.** Use medium flesh on the exposed skin. The paint will be barely visible until you apply the antiquing mixture. Apply one coat. Add a spot of black to make a gray, and apply the mixture to the shadowed areas at the bottoms of the cheeks, inside the nostrils, above the eyelids, inside the ears, and between the fingers. Thin white paint and apply it to the beard, mustache, and hair.



19

**Paint the mushroom, pants, and boots.** Add more white paint to the gray mixture and paint the spots on the mushroom. Add burnt umber to the thinned white to create a tan, and paint the stalk and underside of the mushroom. Dip the brush in the tan and pick up more burnt umber to add depth and shadows to the stalk and underside of the mushroom. Paint the base with thinned tan. Use thinned yellow ochre on the pants. Paint the boots with thinned burnt sienna.



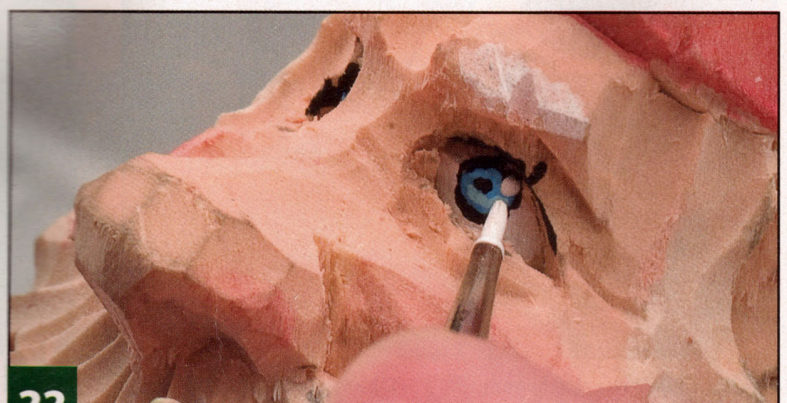
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**Add the blush.** Put water and tomato spice on the palette, but don't mix them. Wet the tips of the ears, the nose, and any other part you want to have a blush. Pull in a bit of tomato spice paint and carefully blend it into the medium flesh. Do not glob on the paint. Apply the tomato spice slightly heavier to the lower lip. Thin the tomato spice a little more and apply it to the hat and mushroom.



21

**Paint the foliage.** Thin moss green slightly with water to basecoat the foliage. Pull the green down into the base. Thin Hooker's green slightly with water and use it to highlight the foliage.



22

**Paint the eyes.** Apply slightly thinned white to the eyes and eyebrows. Allow the paint to dry, and then add a line of carbon black along the top eyelid like eyeliner. Paint the iris carbon black. Make sure both eyes look in the same direction. Thin phthalo blue and add white to make a brilliant blue, and paint the irises. Leave a circle of black visible in each eye. Add a little white to the mixture to make a lighter shade of blue. Add a small crescent of light blue to the bottom of each iris. Paint the black pupils and add a tiny speck of white to each as the highlight.





23

**Paint the tunic and belt.** Thin 1½ drops of pthalo blue and apply it to the tunic. Thin burnt umber with just enough water to make the paint flow and paint the belt. Paint the button with carbon black. Sign the back of the carving with a Micron pen, which will not bleed.

### Antiquing the Carving

Seal the carving with a few coats of Krylon matte finish. Then, antique the carving with a mixture of 70% Watco dark finishing wax and 30% Watco light finishing wax. Apply the mixture with a stiff brush and allow it to sit for a few minutes, and then wipe off the excess with paper towels. Buff the carving with clean paper towels and then dispose of the paper towels carefully; the boiled linseed oil in the wax can cause the paper towels to spontaneously combust.

### materials & tools

#### MATERIALS:

- Basswood, 3" (76mm) thick: 3½" x 7½" (89mm x 191mm)
- Acrylic paint: burnt umber, carbon black, pthalo blue, white, moss green, Hooker's green, tomato spice, yellow ochre, burnt sienna, medium flesh
- Matte finish, such as Krylon
- Watco finishing wax: light, dark
- Micron pen
- Paper towels

#### SPECIAL SOURCES:

Roughouts for the gnome are available for \$20 +S&H from Floyd Rhadigan, 734-649-3259, [www.fantasycarving.com](http://www.fantasycarving.com).

#### TOOLS:

- Carving knife
- Detail knife
- #7 gouge: ¾" (10mm)
- #9 gouges: ¾" (5mm), ¼" (6mm), ¾" (10mm)
- 45° V-tool: ¼" (3mm), ¾" (5mm), ¼" (6mm)
- Micro V-tool: ¼" (3mm)
- Micro gouges: ¼" (2mm), ¼" (3mm), ⅝" (4mm) gouge
- Denture brush
- Paintbrushes

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



Floyd Rhadigan is the past president of the Caricature Carvers of America. His new books, *Carving Fantasy Characters* and *Carving Fantasy Creatures*, are available from Fox Chapel Publishing, 1-800-457-9112 or [www.foxchapelpublishing.com](http://www.foxchapelpublishing.com).



# Garden gnome patterns

Patterns are drawn to scale on a 1" grid. Enlarge or reduce to desired size.

