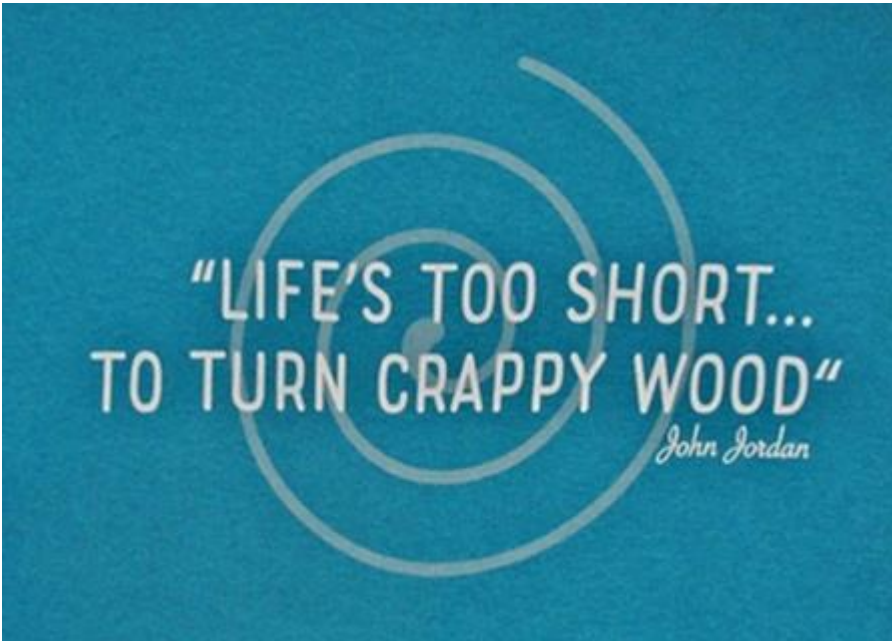




Using that split log

by Richard Raffan



John Jordan is absolutely correct. I began turning wood when a split was a defect that in no way made any turning Art with a capital A. Apart from anything else, turning a blank with splits is tempting it to fly apart once spinning on a lathe. Ideally turning blanks should be split free and especially of splits that run right across the centre of a blank. Never turn a blank when you can see both ends of a split.

Consequently as soon as I can after a tree is felled I split the resulting log in half lengthways along the major split. This cherry log was growing two months earlier. You can see a major split that developed during that time, and the hint of a split from the pith. I usually chop off around 100mm in the hope that within the off-cut there will be blanks for small turning projects like beads, knobs, pencil pots.

When down to what looks like mostly solid material, I cut a slither that can be bent.



Bending the slither will often reveal micro splits (but not here), but I lost another 50mm off the end before the radial split vanished. Even more had to be docked from the other end leaving me with a relatively short billet.



With all but one major split removed from either end, I cut along the centre of that split in the hope that I'll end up with a decent bowl blank.



The new flat surface allows me square up a short board.....



... from which to cut a square that I can further cut into two endgrain blanks, or round for a bowl.



The remainder of the board was too short for a decent bowl blank, so was cut for small spindles and endgrain projects. I've found such short pieces rarely split as they dry if stacked in a cardboard box to season. The bowl blank is best cut to a disk and rough turned.

