

Turn an Urn

1 lb. body weight = 1 cubic inch of ashes

1 cup of rice = 14.5 cubic inches

200 lb. person requires 14 cups of rice

Cylinder calculator link: <https://www.calculatorsoup.com/calculators/geometry-solids/cylinder.php>

 <p>typical commercial urn: 10" H x 6" diameter brass about 200 cubic inches \$70.</p>	 <p>Fancy commercial urn: 10 x 7 at widest point 200 cubic inches - \$300.</p>	 <p>7 x 6 interior 197 cubic inches Simple urn American Woodturner V27:no.5 pp20-21</p>
		
		

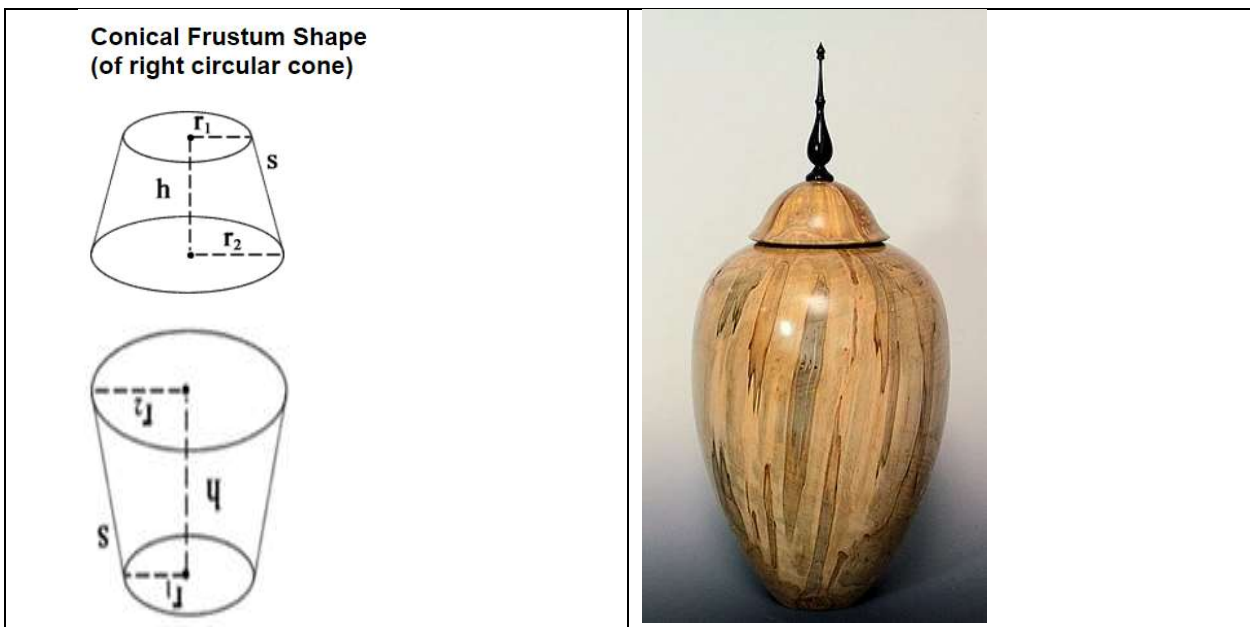


### Turn an Urn

I once was asked if I could turn one of my hollow forms into an urn. It was pretty simple to add a lid, and since then I've turned over a dozen urns. Probably the biggest question is how large to make the urn so that the ashes fit into it. I found this calculator on the web. The formula for finding the volume of a hollowform isn't complicated if the form is a straight-sided cylinder – It is  $3.4 * \text{Radius squared} * \text{Height}$ . So a cylinder with a 3" inside radius, that is 7" deep will be  $3.4 * 9 * 7 = 197.82$  cubic inches. One pound of body weight – before cremation – equals 1 cubic inch of ashes.

The process becomes more complicated with different shaped hollow forms. A spherical urn with an inside diameter of 8" and a depth of 8" inches – has a volume of 268 cubic inches,

A shaped urn with a wider shoulder presents a different problem it is the result of two conical frustum shapes. If the top shape has a top radius of 1.5" , a bottom radius of 3" and height of 3" it has a volume of 49 cubic inches. If the bottom shape is 1.5" radius at the bottom and 3" at the junction, and 6" high the volume of the bottom is 99 cubic inches for a total volume of 148 cubic inches.



## Considerations when turning an urn

1. Green or dry wood? If someone commissions an urn I first, ask when they need it. Of course when cremation ashes are delivered, they are in a plastic bag in a cardboard box, and it isn't important that they be immediately put into an urn – BUT, if there is a service involved and the client wants the urn at the service, you need to know. It takes me between 2-6 months to finish an urn from green wood, depending on the wood and how quickly it dries. It might take me up to a week to finish an urn from kiln dry wood. I try to have at least one urn available if they need something immediately.
2. Is this a decorative urn to be displayed or an urn that will be buried? There are situations where the urn might be buried in a memory garden. I ran into this once where the urn had to be made from pine with no finish on the wood.
3. Weight of the body being cremated. Affects the size of the urn. It is easier to make an urn bigger than needed than it is to remake it. Remember that the dimensions are the inside of the urn – if the walls are  $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick the wood size needs to be  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1" larger than the calculated dimensions.
4. The rice method is great to determine how large an urn is – but useless for estimating the size of a new urn.
5. Consideration must be given to the size of the opening at the top of the urn – as large as possible within the design to aid in filling. How will the top be fitted? Screw threaded tops require inserts made from suitable wood that will hold its shape.
6. Are the ashes to be shared with relatives – are multiple smaller urns desired? Same or similar design?
7. Shape of the urn – I ask the client if they see something they like or if they have an idea for the urn. Do they want something plain and simple or something bolder and statelier?
8. Communication and shipping. Are you working with someone face to face or over a distance? I invite clients to come in and see progress at any time – if at a distance I try to send pictures at different stages. Shipping costs need to be considered.
9. Pricing – what are you going to charge for your time and materials? Clients usually want an estimate. It's easy to underestimate the time needed. Urns that have exotic wood inserts or threaded lids cost more than locally available woods and friction fit lids.
10. Empathy with the clients – this is generally a difficult time for them, and it helps to make suggestions that will relieve some of the decision making, and to listen to their stories if they want to talk about the deceased. It might give you an idea of what they would like to see in the urn design.
11. Craftsmanship – it is important to do your very best – this is an heirloom piece.

Walter Wager  
waltwager@gmail.com