

RAZERTIP™ P80® Pyrographic Controller review

INTRODUCTION

Like wood, gourds are a good surface on which to burn with a pyrographic machine (aka: “woodburner”). There are a number of brands available and all are worth exploring to find the right one for you—Razertip, Burnmaster™, Colwood™, Optima™, to name a few. How do you find out which is right for you? That is a tough question to answer. It could be a referral from an expert, a friend, reading Facebook group conversation or watching reviews on YouTube. Superb work is done by Carlotta Craig, a wood burner, with the Optima machine. She explained to me it has consistent heat at low and high temperatures and the Optima pens are durable, polished and don't get too hot. Much-admired artist, author and wood burner, Minisa Robinson, prefers the Walnut Hollow Versa-Tool® to create her stunning work. See the photo for her experience on a tool for under \$40. And gourd artist, Bill Decker, uses a Detail Master. If and when it quits, he says he'll probably go on to his Razertip. Clearly, everyone has their own preference.

JENN AVERY

Well known gourd artist and expert, Jenn Avery (<http://www.jragourdart.com>), shared her experiences with pens and machines with me. She began with the Detail Master Sabre IV and used it for over 12 years. When the electronics started to fail about six years ago and the manufacturer defunct the Burnmaster Eagle came highly recommended by a friend. She had both Optima and Detail Master pens at that time and wanted a machine that could accept her pens. The Burnmaster accepts any brand pens (with adapter). Later, the Detail Master pens “died due to old age” and Jenn replaced them with Razertip pens since she liked the shaders in that brand. She explained to me that these pens are a bit more delicate for the Burnmaster’s factory default heat setting. To her delight, she learned the factory setting could be reduced to a slightly cooler heat spectrum. Jenn says her Burnmaster Eagle has served her well and has no complaints about it. See the photo in this article for more information.

Due to the great variety of pen/tip styles and function they are beyond the scope of this article. However, when you are shopping for a burner you should consider what the manufacturer has to offer and whether adapters will be required for other pen brands.

For my own gourd burning experience I've used the Razertip model SS-D10® for 10 years and I've been very happy with it. But, just recently, Razertip introduced a new model which I bought. I am reporting on it in this article.

THE RAZERTIP P80®

1. This is the number one, biggest reason to consider the P80—it is power-regulated, in my opinion. It takes unregulated AC power and converts it to stable DC power. If your input voltage changes—even if it's a big change—your tip temperature will remain constant. I have put this to the test. At the highest heat setting I used a Razertip long spear (actually called a “gourd cutter”) and a space heater on high simultaneously. I could not discern any change to the red hot tip. It remained red hot as I gradually burned through ¼” gourd thickness. Because it is power-regulated the P80 works faultlessly in a classroom situation! I can't say this about the SS-D10.
2. Three digits, from 100 to 800, are entered on the key pad for a heat setting. The heat setting is the amount of power the P80 is providing to the pen/tip. If the heat setting is changed while the pen is powered the pen's tip temperature will change immediately after you've entered the third digit. Bump the temperature up (+) or down (-) as desired. Immediate change is a real time saver. I like the convenient built-in memory which recalls the three most recently inputted heat settings.
3. The tip temperature range, 340°F to 1400°F, approximately, is based on the #1L Razertip tip.
4. The cord jack bezel lights blue when power is flowing to pen. It will flash if there is a broken connection in the cord, pen or tip—a good safety measure.
5. This is a single burner unit. Want a dual or triple burner? Quickly and easily add up to two P80x expansion modules (no tools required) for an adaptable system that gives each pen its own heat setting and memory function. Toggle between pens by touching the screen you wish to use—very convenient.
6. Warranty: three years unconditionally. Made in Canada.

7. The P80 is compatible with all existing Razertip pens but the company stresses to use the pen cord supplied with the tool. No longer is there a need to use heavy duty cords with heavy duty pens.
8. Weight: 15.5 oz. Size: 4.5" x 4.5" x 3.6"



"I burn almost every day and for long periods at a time. The Burnmaster Eagle has served me very well and I have no complaints about it. I love having the dual ports so that I can have 2 pens plugged in. It heats up fast, and cools down fast when turned off."

Jenn Avery



Photo Courtesy Jennifer Avery

WALNUT HOLLOW Creative Versa-Tool

I use the Walnut Hollow Creative Versa-Tool and the shading point for most of my work. Using this setup is very similar to drawing with a pencil, and I find that I can create most techniques and textures by using the single point. The Versa-Tool is a soldering iron-based burning unit and I like it's ability to maintain a consistent heat. It does take about five minutes to warm up to operating temperature, but after that the heat remains quite stable, especially when burning lighter shades. It's important to remember that the burner must be off and completely cool before changing out the points or you could damage the point or threads. I also like that the woodburner is an affordable tool for both beginners and advanced artists as well.

Minisa Robinson
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