

## Where Did You Get That?

By Diane Woodall

A handy little guide for finding things you can't live without.



We are fortunate to live in a city that is large enough to offer us some great local resources for the supplies we use to make beads and jewelry, however there is a big world of suppliers out there if you just know where to look. Finding a source for something particular you are looking for is frustrating and time consuming, so I'm hoping to save you a little time by sharing some good sources in this article. Thanks to all of our members who sent in their suggestions.

Let's start with studio set-up. You can't make beads until you have your tools and equipment and two of the best places to get everything you need are Flametree Glass [www.flametreeglass.com](http://www.flametreeglass.com) and Blue Moon Glassworks [www.austinbluemoon.com](http://www.austinbluemoon.com) Both of these fine companies are sponsors and have ads in our newsletter. We invited them to be sponsors because they have such good customer service and several of our members have worked with them to outfit their entire studio. You can call Lance or Maureen at Flametree or Jim or Rose at Blue Moon and they will walk you through exactly what you need for your studio, order it and then help answer your questions over the phone when you are ready for installation.

Once you get your torch set up you'll want to buy a torch-mounted marver (in my opinion one of the absolutely necessary tools for making beads). I purchased my torch marver from Griffin Glass Company [www.griffinglass.com](http://www.griffinglass.com) because they have a huge variety of torch marvers from which to choose. They also sell tools of just about any description including a couple of self-contained ventilation systems.

Most lampworkers have a few indispensable tools that they can't live without. For me they are my parallel mashers and my crosslock tweezers. I purchased my large parallel mashers from Flametree for \$40 the first year I was making beads and it was one of my wisest investments. Don't try and skimp and buy cheaper ones. They won't be truly parallel and you'll be wasting your money. My other favorite tool is a set of tweezers I use to pull stringer and twisties. You can buy them from one of our sponsors, ABR Imagery [www.abrimagery.com](http://www.abrimagery.com) The great thing about these tweezers is that you press them together to open and then when you let up they close...and stay closed!

Barefoot Art is a wonderful source for beadmakers looking for interesting and useful tools. Scott Bouwens is the inventor of the mandrel spinner and offers this as well as many other interesting gadgets on his site; things like button makers, rolling marvers and poking tools. [www.barefootart.com](http://www.barefootart.com)

Ginger Young recommends a company called Widget Supply for dremmel tools and tools for jewelry making. [www.widgetsupply.com](http://www.widgetsupply.com) They have a huge selection of hard-to-find hobby tools. Ginger sent me an e-mail recently telling me about the excellent customer service she received from them, and told me she received her order in just a couple of days.

I recently discovered a tool for reaming out beads that is the best thing I've ever tried. It's called a **Beadreamer** and is sold by a lampworker named David Fousek at [www.artintheround.com](http://www.artintheround.com) With this reaming bit, which fits right into a portable dremmel tool, you can clean out a bead with just a few strokes. It's a diamond-coated bit that costs \$30, but you'll save so much time cleaning beads you won't care about the price. He sells them in 1/16", 5/64" and 3/32" sizes. This is truly the biggest time saving tool I own!

If you are "twistie challenged" or just plain hate making them, worry not. Lynn at Artemis Lampwork [www.artemislampwork.com](http://www.artemislampwork.com) will make them for you. Just contact her and give her your color preferences and she'll send you your finished twisties, made to order.

Once you've made your beads and cleaned them you'll want to wear them. For an amazing array of beadable items and add-a-bead items check out [www.karenthomas.us](http://www.karenthomas.us) Her website is a gold mine if you are looking for beadable pens, letter openers, pendants, key chains, chokers, bracelets, wine stoppers, letter openers, fan pulls, canapé knife or salad sets. If you can stick beads onto it, Karen has it. Another wonderful source for beadable items is Burgard Studios. They are the originators of the beadable ring. [www.burgardstudio.com](http://www.burgardstudio.com) They offer bookmarks, pendants, rings and charms that you can embellish with your own beads.

Another quick and easy idea for wearing your beads instantly is to wear them on a cable or wire that will fit through the hole of your bead. I like to buy stainless steel cables from Rings N Things and they fit through a 3/32" hole if you are careful to ream it out properly when you are cleaning your bead. You can check out their entire line of choker cables at [www.rings-things.com](http://www.rings-things.com) They sell them in the standard stainless steel or in black and even have some in different colors. If you are doing jewelry shows and want an inexpensive and popular way to sell your pendants these little cables are the way to go. They come in several lengths and are only about \$1.50 each when you buy ten or more.

If you want to wire your focal bead into a pendant one of the best sources for pendant bails is Rio Grande at [www.riogrande.com](http://www.riogrande.com) To use their website you have to register and you have to pay for their catalog, but the quality of their merchandise more than makes up for it and they do refund the cost of the catalog when you place your first order. Many other companies offer pendant bails, but none has the selection of Rio Grande.

One of my favorite sources for jewelry findings is Nina Designs at [www.ninadesigns.com](http://www.ninadesigns.com) Nina requires a \$100 minimum order and her prices are high even with a wholesale discount, but there isn't a place on the planet that has such an extensive inventory of earring findings. When I was doing shows I made all of my earrings using Nina's findings and they were very popular. It's worth setting up a wholesale account if you have a tax ID# because her wholesale price is half of retail. Nina also runs sales that are really quite good and if you are looking for something out of the ordinary, she'll have it.

For truly handmade findings there is a seller on Etsy named Cathy Dailey who makes the most beautiful silver findings you can imagine. For those of you who aren't familiar with Etsy, it is a website that features handmade artisan items and supplies. [www.etsy.com](http://www.etsy.com) Cathy's username is cathydailey. I think you'll like her handmade findings.

Another wonderful source for artisan quality findings is Rocio Bearer [www.fineartbyrocio.com](http://www.fineartbyrocio.com) Rocio offers some beautiful earring and bracelet blanks that you can embellish with your own lampwork beads. She also sells her own R-4 silver glass that is highly reactive and very popular with our members.

For everyday findings, wire, headpins, etc., Foreign Source is the best and most economical source if you are looking for one supplier for everything. I know there are a lot of companies out there where you might get a better deal on this or that, but the consistency of quality and customer service you'll get from Foreign Source is very good. [www.foreignsource.com](http://www.foreignsource.com) Unfortunately it is wholesale only, so unless you are making jewelry to sell you'll have to buy retail. Again, the best retail source for findings (quality versus price) is Rio Grande.

For those of you who make a lot of jewelry to sell, being able to save money on your materials is paramount. The two best sources I have found on the Internet for Swarovski crystals is INM Crystals in New York [www.inmcrystal.com](http://www.inmcrystal.com) and Blue Mud [www.bluemud.com](http://www.bluemud.com) Back when I was doing shows I did an exhaustive search for the best prices on crystals and these two companies won hand's down. INM has the best price on cubes I've ever come across. Blue Mud has the best price on 4mm bicones. Neither of these companies sell mixed colors, but for single colors, their prices are the best I've found.

A good source for furnace glass is Beads To You at [www.beadstoyou.com](http://www.beadstoyou.com) They sell a vast array of furnace glass from many different artists in small packages so that you don't have to buy an entire ounce unless you want to. They also have some great Swarovski crystal mixes at good prices and they stock some beadable items, findings and other interesting things besides furnace glass, but it is their furnace glass section that sets them apart.

Last, but not least, once you have your beads or jewelry made and want to sell it or give it away you'll need

boxes and bags. If you want to sell at shows you'll need displays and a jewelry case. All of these things can be found at Nile Corp. [www.nilecorp.com](http://www.nilecorp.com) Many of our members have been long-time customers of this company. Their prices on jewelry display items are the best in the world and their selection is vast. They also sell paper-lined jewelry boxes in black, white, natural, turquoise blue, silver and gold in a huge variety of sizes and at the lowest price anywhere. Nile carries a limited inventory of organza bags for small items like earrings and you can buy a dozen 4 x 5-inch organza bags for \$1.29 in a color assortment and a dozen 4 x 5-inch satin bags for only \$2.19. For another source for organza bags by color try Paper Mart at [www.papermart.com](http://www.papermart.com). Some of you may prefer to stick with one color theme for your packaging and Paper Mart sells their bags by single color.

I hope you will find this information helpful as you navigate your way through the seemingly endless lists of vendors on the Internet. And remember, our sponsors who have ads in our newsletter were all invited by us to advertise here. We have worked with them all personally and can therefore vouch for the quality of their products and their customer service. I couldn't finish without saying a big thank you to all of our sponsors and encourage our members to look to them first when you need something for your lampwork or jewelry projects.