All the News that fits

Southwest Louisiana Woodworkers Club Noember 2020

Mentoring Program - If you have a project, a problem in any woodworking area, these members have volenteered to help. Give them a call. Frank Tartarmella 802-8989; John Marcon: 478-0646; Eltee Thibodeaux: 436-1997; Ray Kebodeaux: 583-2378. Each have years of experience and knowledge.

November Newsletter

Well, at least there is plenty of nice wood about, particularly red and white oak. There are likely other species as well. I'm living on S. Elton Court in LC finally (my renter graciously invited us to stay there in a spare beroom while our main home is under repair). But on N. Elton Court there are very large oak logs available (bring a chain saw and a truck or trailer) to slab off some great table tops.

It would appear that hurricane season is mostly over in our area though Nicaragua and Honduras are getting hit at this writting with Hurricane Iota. This is twice in two weeks for them -- kind of like the Lake Area. We were in Honduras a few years ago and visited, among other places, Trujillo and Puerto Castillo on the Southern coast of Honduras.

The area is lovely with mountains right down to the Carribean and interesting wood. I (illegally -- but I did not know that at the time) imported what is called there as Poisonwood (*metopium toxiferum*). This is basically poision ivy in tree form. It also grows in Florida.

It turns beatifully (you need very sharp gouges) and polishes great without any .finish. The key to working this wood is to wear a resperator or at least a N-95 mask as it is toxic prior to a sealed finish. Be certain to wash your body and clothing after working this wood. From the relatively small amount returned to the U.S. and purchased from a furniture maker in Trujillo, I turned a couple of small and lovely bowls from the wood.

Regarding our future meetings, this is still fluid in terms of when and where. The Covid-19 is still with us and given the average age of members, it would be best practice not to meet until a good product is available for protection from this pandemic. Be sure that we will let you know when it is safe to return to regular mee and of course we will check with our President, Dr. Fey before returning to regular meetings. The Spring of 2021 looks promising, perhaps in April.

Tiger Flakes

Shellac is my favorite finish, I have tried nearly every brand of flakes on the market. By far, my favorite brand is the premium dewaxed flakes – Tiger Flakes – made by Brooklyn Tool & Craft. Shellac is so easy to apply to any surface, is completely non-toxic, goes on easy and dries quickly. In fact, the pills you take every day are likely enclosed in a shellac capsule. You can eat it (a secret is that most chocolate candy is coated in shellac as well)!

There are no lac bugs in Brooklyn and so this stuff is obviously sourced from a third party. But what makes it special is the care and attention lavished on the flakes in transit to you. Tiger Flakes are in the first class – they have fewer bug parts than any other brand I've tried (and I've filtered out a lot of legs and other buggy bits along the way).

By the way, these are fresh supplies. Tools for Working Wood ships them in heavy, double-sealed plastic with a desiccant pack. The result is that the flakes dissolve quickly in alcohol. You can typically mix up shellac in Mason jars – and flakes that I have mixed in the evening are ready to go the next morning.

Another thing, that is amussing, is the wide variety of products that they sell at https://toolsforworkingwood.com. For example, if you are in need of carriage and wagon axles for your horse drawn vehicles, Working Wood can supply them. Go for it.

Side note: Many shellac snobs get upset over about methanol vs. ethanol when mixing the shellac. With the Tiger Flakes, you can use any old denatured alcohol off the shelf at Stines in Lake Charles or Sulphur and other locations across the state and it works beautifully.

Because the shellac is fresh, it dries hard, fast and clear. Tiger Flakes have won over many who had tried shellac once and didn't like it because it was gummy and didn't dry well.

Tiger Flakes come in the colors super blond, blond, amber and garnet – each color deeper in orange than the last. Yes, it's expensive ($32 to $42 for a half-pound), but it will not let you down.

By the way, if you have a stain on your ceiling from one of the storms, a thin coat of shellac and then a coat of paint will stop further bleed through. A spray-on shellac product will work well. Basically, you are creating the Kilz paint. Barry Humphus.

Stain Issues continues on the next page.

Stain Issues

Different boards on glued-up panels take stain differently, some boards coming out lighter than others.

You can fix and apply more stain to the lighter boards either directly on the wood or by adding some of the stain color to the finish and shading them darker. It's seldom possible to get an exact match, but you can reduce the contrast significantly. Another way to even the coloring is to bleach the wood using a two-part bleach (sodium hydroxide and hydrogen peroxide), then stain the wood to the color you want after sanding to remove the fuzz.

The stain dries before you can get all the excess wiped off. You can fix fhis problem is fairly common with water-based and lacquer-based stains because both dry rapidly. Apply more of the same stain, the thinner for the stain, or if necessary, a paint stripper, and remove the excess stain.

If the color is then not even, or it's too light, you'll need to apply more stain. Switch to a slower drying stain, work on smaller sections at a time, or apply and wipe off the stain faster by using a cloth or spray gun to apply the stain and a large dry cotton cloth to remove the excess stain. You can also get someone else to perform one of the steps while you do the other. Stains that thin or clean up with mineral spirits (paint thinner) dry the slowest, but you have to wait longer before applying a finish.

The end grain on raised-panel cabinet doors gets too dark when you wipe on and wipe off a stain.

The fix is to sand the end grain so there's absolutely no remaining roughness, or spray the stain in light enough coats so you don't need to wipe off any excess. The darkening is caused by more stain lodging in the rough areas in the end grain than in the smooth-sanded areas in the long grain of the rest of the door. Spraying stain without wiping deposits an equal amount of color everywhere, so the roughness doesn't impact the darkness of the color.

The stain highlights gouges and machine marks ("washboarding") left by a jointer or planer. Also highlighted are the sanding scratches left by coarse-grit sandpaper and the squiggles left by random-orbit sanders.

A common flaw when staining is machine marks such as telegraphing through and, in fact, being highlighted. You need to sand these out before applying the stain.

To avoid blotching on softwoods and most tight-grained hardwoods, apply a washcoat before staining. Oil- and varnish-based washcoats are commonly sold as "wood conditioner." These dry slowly, so you should give them six or eight hours before applying the stain.

Re-sand the wood to below the depth of the problems up to #150- or #180-grit sandpaper. Before beginning, wipe off as much of the stain as possible using naphtha, lacquer thinner or acetone so the stain doesn't clog the sandpaper. You don't have to remove all the stain color before re-staining, just get the remaining color fairly even.

The blotching is caused by flaws in the wood that absorb more stain, so the solution is to keep all the stain very near the surface of the wood. You'll have to remove any blotching that has occurred by sanding. Then switch to a gel stain (which doesn't flow so it doesn't penetrate deeply), partially seal the wood with a washcoat/wood conditioner (to keep the stain from penetrating deeply), or spray the stain and don't wipe off the excess. This will leave an equal amount of stain everywhere.

Spray stain doesn't color inside corners well. The turbulence created by the air pressure prevents the stain from reaching these recessed corners. So reduce the air pressure to the minimum possible, while still getting good results, or brush the stain into these areas.

Places where sweat has dripped on the wood during sanding come out darker when you apply the stain. The sweat (or any water for that matter) raises grain and roughens the wood, so more stain lodges. Follow the directions in problem above for sanding the problem and re-staining.

The stain you're using doesn't get the wood dark enough. Commercial stains vary in the ratio of pigment or dye they contain relative to vehicle (binder and solvent). The higher the ratio the darker the stain colors the wood. So an easy solution might be to change brands or to add some pigment or dye to the stain you're using.

There are two other possibilities. One is to sand to a coarser grit: #150 instead of #180, for example, or #120 instead of #150. Just don't get so coarse that the stain highlights the scratches. You'll have the greatest success if all the sanding-grit scratches from the last sanding go with the grain.

The other solution is to leave some stain on the wood during the wiping stage. This is called a "dirty wipe." To achieve success you must wipe every part the same, so it'll help to have a sample panel to match. Apply a coat of finish to this panel to bring out the full color.

Should The color of the stained wood is just a little off, add a little of the opposite color in the color spectrum to the finish and tone the wood. For example, if the wood is too warm (reddish), add green. If the wood is too cool (greenish), add red. You can also add black to reduce brightness. Keep in mind that lighting plays a part in how colors appear. Fluorescent lighting causes colors to appear cooler. Incandescent lighting causes colors to appear warmer.

To Finish, Understand the Terminology

All technical fields have their own vocabulary. You'll have difficulty mastering any technical field without understanding its vocabulary. There are some most commonly used finishing terms and their meanings.

Sealer (sanding sealer) is the first coat of any finish. The first coat penetrates, dries, and seals the pores so the next coat of finish (or any other liquid) has difficulty penetrating into the wood. The sealer coat also locks raised wood fibers in an upright position causing the surface to feel rough. To achieve a smooth final finish, you should sand the sealer coat smooth before applying additional coats. Special sanding sealers are made for lacquer and alkyd varnish that are difficult to sand. Sanding sealers don't clog sandpaper as easily as these finishes.

Finish is a substance that changes from a liquid to a solid after it has been applied to the wood. The purpose of a finish is to protect the wood and enhance its appearance. By adding colorant to a finish (usually called a binder in this situation), you can make a stain, glaze, toner or paint.

Film finish is any finish that can be built (by repeated applications) to a hard, thick layer, or layers, on top of the wood. The key requirement for a film finish is that it must dry hard. This is in contrast to so-called "penetrating" finishes, such as oil, which don't dry hard. Alkyd and polyurethane varnish, shellac, lacquer, water-based finish and catalyzed (two-part) finishes are all film finishes.

For eample, a washcoat is a highly thinned finish applied to blotch-prone woods (see top half of birch panel above) to partially seal the pores to reduce the blotching. A washcoat can be made from any finish. Wood conditioner is a washcoat made by thinning oil or varnish. The trick for having success with it is to let it dry thoroughly before applying a stain.

A washcoat is any finish thinned with two or more parts thinner to partially seal the wood and prevent uneven stain penetration (blotching) on soft woods such as pine and tight-grained hardwoods such as cherry and birch. So-called wood conditioners are oil or varnish washcoats. To be effective these (and all) washcoats have to be allowed to dry thoroughly before a stain is applied. A washcoat can also be used between coloring steps with minimum build to prevent the colors from running together.

Thinner (mineral spirits, naphtha, lacquer thinner, alcohol, water) is any evaporating liquid that can be used to thin a finish, stain, glaze or pore filler to make application easier.

Sheen is the degree of gloss in a dried finish. Most film finishes dry to a gloss sheen unless flatting agents (gloss-reducing solid particles) are added. Semi-gloss, satin, matte and flat varnishes, lacquers, and water-based finishes have had flatting agents added. These finishes must be stirred before use to put the flatting agents into suspension.

Stain changes the color of wood. There are two types of colorant used in stains: pigment and dye. Pigment particles are opaque and resemble colored earth. They settle to the bottom of the can and must be stirred into suspension before using. Applied to wood, pigment lodges in recesses, such as pores and sanding scratches, large enough to hold it and remains there after the excess stain is wiped off. Built up on wood, pigment obscures the wood like paint. To glue the pigment particles to the wood, a binder (oil, varnish, lacquer or water-based finish) must be included in the stain. Dye is transparent. It dissolves rather than suspends in the liquid. Once dissolved, dye remains in solution. It can be combined with a binder, or simply dissolved in a liquid and applied.

Glaze is a stain that has been made thick and resistant to flow so it stays where you put it, even on vertical surfaces. Gel stain, for example, makes a good glaze. You can use a glaze to darken or change the color tone of wood after the wood has been sealed. You can leave a glaze in the recesses of carvings, turnings and moldings to give the appearance of age and three-dimensional depth. You can feather out a glaze to highlight certain areas, such as the centers of cabinet doors. Or, using special glazing tools, you can make patterns in a glaze that resemble wood grain or marble. When the glaze is dry, protect it from being scratched off by applying one or more coats of a clear, film finish.

Pore filler is essentially a glaze with silica (fine sand) added to provide bulk. Pore filler is used to produce a mirror-flat effect by filling the pores of porous woods such as quarter-sawn oak, mahogany and walnut before the application of a film finish. Pore filler doesn't take stain well, so pigment should be added before application. You can apply pore filler directly to raw wood to fill and stain in one operation, or you can apply a different colored filler to a sealed (and stained) surface to highlight the pores, as I've done on the right half of the panel.

Toner is finish, usually lacquer, with dye or pigment added and sprayed. To provide better control, thin with up to six parts thinner. Toner adds color in very thin layers without penetrating into the wood. Toner can be used to change or adjust a color after the wood has been sealed.

Finally, Rubbing and polishing is the procedure used to level the surface of the final coat of finish and raise or lower the sheen. Various abrasives, including fine sandpaper, steel wool and rubbing compounds, are used. lower the sheen. Do it well.

No Meeting this Month

We are still limited by the Corona Virus. Hope to have a meeting some time in the Spring after we all get a shot or=f something and we hope soon.

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