

EXPERT TIPS ON EXTERIOR WOOD FINISHES - OR- THE BENEFITS OF POWERLIFT, SPA-N-DECK SURFACE PREP AND A BIT OF ELBOW GREASE

Wood is making a big come-back. Many home owners want the good looks of beautiful wood to enhance the appearance of their home. Whether it means building the entire home from wood with cedar or similar cladding or the most popular addition of a timber deck for outdoor entertaining. This presents a unique opportunity for the progressive painting contractor to cash in on this trend. Not only is there a demand for the finishing of new decks but with the right follow-up there will be a demand for maintenance which a good painter should take advantage of. Yet, while many painting contractors have a good understanding of paint, few are very familiar with exterior wood finishes.

To properly understand exterior wood finishes, it is important to recognize that these popular products fall into three broad categories. There are transparent (oils), semi-transparent (oils or acrylics containing some pigments) and solid colour (paint) wood finishes.

Transparent wood finishes are applied in one or more thin coats depending on the manufacturers recommendations. They will look the best, highlight the grain of the wood but unfortunately don't last very long in our U.V. rich sunny part of the world.

Semi-transparent wood finishes are also applied in relatively thin coatings that allows both the grain and texture of the underlying wood to show through. These will last for longer periods, anywhere from 6 months to 2 years depending on the brand, as the pigments in the coating will give more protection against U.V. damage.

Solid colour wood finishes contain more pigment than semi-transparent varieties, are of heavier consistency, and go on in thicker coats. They may still reveal the texture of the wood, but not the grain. Because they are more highly pigmented, they have good "hiding" ability, which makes them a better choice for blemished wood. They are more or less a paint.

All exterior wood finishes come in oil-based and acrylic-based formulations. Oil-based finishes tend to penetrate wood, while acrylic finishes form a protective film on the surface. However there are now acrylic wood finishes coming onto the market which combine both the advantages of Penetration and top-coating. Flood's Spa-N-Deck penetrates well with the first coat and forms a hard and abrasive resistant top coating with subsequent applications.

Surface Preparation – The Make or Break of a Good Job

One of the most important tasks is the proper preparation of the wood's surface. It is essential when applying any type of wood finish. The whole surface has to be free of all dirt, dust and mildew, before a successful Job can be achieved.

New wood often contains some mill glaze from the milling process, which often prevents the finish from adhering properly. You can remove mill glaze by either sanding with a suitable grit or use one of the new wood care products on the market remove both mill glaze and help open the wood pores as well as cleaning the wood. The Flood Company have brought out 2 products which prepare all types of outdoor wood for successful coating. Not only will they remove mill glaze and open the wood pores but it also thoroughly cleans the wood removing any unsightly blemishes which may show through the eventual finish. These two products are Powerlift and Spa-N-Deck Surface Prep. Powerlift will remove residuals of old stain, preservatives and oils as well as tannin bleeds whilst Spa-N-Deck Surface Prep will thoroughly clean the surface and restore the look of new wood without bleaching it.

New bare wood that has weathered for more than a few weeks should be treated first with Powerlift to open the pores and remove mill glaze. Then follow with Spa-N-Deck Surface Prep. to clean the surface. Finally, carefully power wash the surface with plain water to remove any residue of the cleaning material. All this will help to remove loose fibers and provide a fresh, clean and stable surface to enable the wood finish to deeply penetrate and adhere to the wood as well as offer a good base for the subsequent top coats. Be careful to not mar or gouge the wood with the power washer. Old wood with residues of previous finishes should be treated in a similar fashion. Powerlift, Spa-N-Deck Surface Prep and power washing.

Dirty, grey wood without previous finishes just needs treatment with Spa-N-Deck Surface Prep followed by power washing.

Applying Wood Finishes

Whatever you may have done in the past - look carefully at the manufacturer's instructions. Wood finishes and their application methods have changed over the years and unless the makers instructions are strictly followed you may be inviting early failure of the finish and - equally important - the loss of a possible repeat customer.

Because most wood finishes contain differing amounts of pigments and since they are sometimes applied in just a single coat, any mistakes in application procedures can be quite noticeable. So, it is important to apply coats in the right way. When coating weatherboards or other cladding apply the finish horizontally, using either a brush or roller. Start at the top of the wall or surface, coating all the way across, a few boards at a time for their whole length to avoid lap marks. Then move on to the next lower boards and continue in this manner until reaching bottom.

In a similar way, when staining vertical sections, apply the stain from the top to the bottom of each section before moving on to the adjacent section.

Use a Quality Wood Finish

Unlike paints, which are often applied over a primer and in multiple coats, exterior wood finishes are typically applied directly to unprimed wood. Whatever product you use, make sure it is a high quality wood finish to best withstand the elements and to maintain a good appearance - for example, a top quality 100% acrylic exterior wood finish such as Spa-N-Deck 100% Acrylic Wood Finish. Such a product will provide maximum adhesion to the wood surface, and will resist fading and mildew growth much better than economy products will. Even so, keep in mind that because of their relatively thin film, exterior finishes may need to be reapplied more often than paint. Flood's Spa-N-Deck is long lasting (3 to 5 times longer than conventional wood finishes and oils). They are the only wood finish that comes with a 2/4 year guarantee against peeling, blistering or cracking.

COATING SPA-N-DECK SYSTEM

We have three products before us; (1) Powerlift (2) Spa-N-Deck Prep. (3) Spa-N-Deck Acrylic Coating, we need to have a clear line in the sand about these products.

POWERLIFT: - Three detergents mixed together in a secret mix that works powerfully on timbers. Let's face it we have to look at timber as a natural product and so in nature the timber is protected by natural occurring processes and these protectorates have to be removed to allow any decking products to soak in and fill up the pores of the timber.

So we will look at two situations: new timber and previously coated timbers.

NEW TIMBER:- Timbers fall into the category of having natural occurring oils such as our eucalyptus timbers, natural occurring greasy timbers, mostly local timbers from Asia, and lastly timbers which have a degree of tannin from brown to red and including pinks as in jarrah and Fijian Mahogany and Tassie Ash etc. All of the above will have to be treated with Powerlift, to bring to the surface those naturally occurring contaminants and then with the scrubbing action to remove the surface contaminants. They are not bad contaminants so to say because they protect the timber, but to get any new product into the wood they have to be removed so they can be replaced. If you wish you can just use Powerlift and then what ever decking product you choose. If you do choose to go this way you have to make sure the timber is sufficiently dry, but the natural occurring tannins will be brought to the surface and then cleaned, will leave behind a residue of colour which may be not pleasing, but if you wish, you need to go no further in the cleaning process. Incidentally if you are going to use decking oils add 10% -15% Penetrol and you will get better penetration into the wood.

PREVIOUSLY COATED TIMBER: - If you want to remove any existing faded product, whether decking stain, decking oil, linseed oil or water repellent oil or any decking oil containing lanoline, you should use Powerlift to remove this. Any film bearing product such or acrylic decking System such as Spa-N-Deck, if it is more than 3 years in the direct sun Powerlift could shift it. Remember this is not a paint stripper it contains no harmful ingredients, so any film bearing product, that you wish to remove has to be approached differently, such as using Flood's Citristrip to blister the film and to scrap it away, then use Powerlift to remove the rest, what is left. Again the coating System is your choice.

The second product we need to look at is Spa-N-Deck Prep; it is a powerful medium with oxalic acid added to open the grain and to remove the last scraps of tannin etc. when using the Prep. after Powerlift the resulting process brings back the natural colour of the timber. (Incidentally oxalic acid is the toxic leaves of a rhubarb plant)

You will find if our cleaning process is used you will get a better result and thus a better Job than any others on the market, if you choose not to use Flood's Spa-N-Deck product you must wait for the timber to dry sufficiently.

The third product we need to discuss is Spa-N-Deck Acrylic, this is a unique product and there is no other product like it on the market. It is unique because you save time by not having to wait for the cleaning products to dry, you use the Prep. straight after the Powerlift and while the timber is damp after the SND Prep has been used and flushed off you apply the first treatment of Spa-N-Deck acrylic using the water to draw it down into the timber. In simpler words it is a (1), (2), (3) process one after the other and no waiting period. It is an "in the timber, on the timber" product. Most finishes fall into one of two categories - a surface sealer or a penetrating finish. Various industry experts will argue the benefits of one or the other, but why try to choose when you can combine the best attributes of both into one finish? Surface films lie on top of the wood and do not dive into the surface as a penetrating finish does. While surface sealers form a protective layer on the top of the wood, which allows for longer-lasting colour retention, they can be easily scuffed off with heavy foot traffic or sliding furniture. Surface films can also clog the wood pores, and with repeated use, cause build-up that can peel and flake. Especially in harsh tropical environment the timber makes big movements between rain and sunshine. In exterior usage, varnishes or sealer are mostly the big loser because of cracks resulting from shrinking and expanding process. The next rain will penetrate into the timber through the cracks and can't vaporize out. As a result of this cycling process the timber underneath the protective layer starts fouling. After a short period, the timber loose strength and has to be replaced. A penetrating finish dives into the wood, working from the inside out and allowing for longer protection from nature's damaging elements. A penetrating finish, however, does not retain colour as well as a surface film and can fade at a faster rate. Flood's Spa-N-Deck 100% acrylic wood finish offers the best of both types of finishes by combining the superior qualities of both penetration as well a protective and abrasion resistant top layer.

Floods Spa-N-Deck wood finish is guaranteed against cracking and peeling for 2 years on decks and 4 years on vertical surfaces.

In Thailand all Flood products are exclusively imported and distributed by TCM Asia Co., Ltd.

TCM Asia has been started operation as unknown small player 6 years ago on Phuket in tiny Kamala valley. Today, TCM Asia is a well known company - standing for quality and professional service moved already in Phuket to the Royal Place at Bypassroad across Tesco Lotus to be closer to the customer. TCM Asia has taff expansion plans. A branch in Khao Lak is already in pre-opening phase. A branch in Pattaya will be opened in End of Oktober, Bangkok get a first touch with an office near Suvarnabhumi Airport and Koh Samui should be in operation until end of this year. In the next high season 2008/2009 TCM Asia will launch the year of the **Long Term Low Maintenance** concept. This unique concept will help all developers and hotels to control the cost in timber treatments for in total four years with warranty. With great help of the Thailand – Australian-Free-Trade-Agreement TCM Asia is able to reduce

full service prices for timber treatments in two years even by rising general cost expected 10% per year. The unique concept is supported by the manufacturer quality warranty of FLOOD. TCM Asia will offer the first treatment of timber surfaces for 380 THB per m² in full service with a warranty of 2 years under normal usage conditions. In two years the second treatment will be done for 320 THB with additional 2 years warranty. This means for 700 THB over 4 years time the timber will look great every time. This comes down to an average fix budgeted of 175 THB each m² per year. This is latest the time where the cost controller says „Whow,, The management team around entrepreneur and director Andreas Ruthe are working with maximum power to reach the mission of the company in 2010. „We want to be the most professional product and service provider for the hotel and construction industry to rise standards to highest levels by bringing maintenance costs down to a minimum,,. The Long Term Low Maintenance story will be continued soon belonging other problem surfaces like sand wash.

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