

## Get A Jump On Spring Landscape This Fall

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## Finish forum

### Restoring furniture for beauty and economy

**M**ANY A tired table, chair or sofa is ousted from a home because it outlived its desirability.

It's out of sync with the rest of your decor or so stained, frayed and wobbly that you're sick to death of looking at it.

If you can find it within you to renovate your furniture, you may find it holds more than one lifetime.

This is no secret to the veteran bargain hunter. People who trawl flea markets and garage sales know that one man's junk is another man's treasure.

Once you have committed to the refinishing project, you'll find saving money is not the only happy consequence. Some of the most unique belongings are those toiled over with your own fingers.

Approach that dilapidated credenza, hutch or love seat like the sculptor who wants to liberate the form from the marble. Chances are good that our frazzled old furniture holds within it the promise of something truly sensational.

**TALK TO YOUR** local hardware store about materials, and begin your research. Find yourself a good book on furniture restoration and refinishing.

"How to Restore and Repair Furniture," edited by Alan Smith (Chartwell Books), is a thorough how-to with instructions as complete as recipes.

"The Illustrated Handbook of Furniture Restoration" by George Buchanan (Harper and Row) details common furniture problems and how to remedy them, down to the intricacies of rush weave, cane, hardware and upholstery.

Fine Wood Working Magazine publishes a compilation of articles on finishing and refinishing. You'll find expert advice on everything from 18th-century varnish resins to water gilding and charring.

The most doable project is, of course, that requiring little or no additional carpentry. As a novice, better to start with a small piece rather than undertaking an armoire or a break-front.

Formby's wood finishing manufacturers offers the following suggestions for furniture restoration:

• Work in moderate temperatures. Paint removers work best when the temperature is between 65 F and 85 F.

Fall is the ideal time for do-it-yourself restoration.

• Don't stroke the paint remover back and forth over the furniture. This fans the gases and cuts down on product effectiveness.

Instead, apply paint remover by dragging the filled paint brush a short distance. Then stop, refill the brush and make another small stroke.

Don't touch the remover until all the bubbling action stops.

• Toothpicks and string soaked in paint remover make excellent tools for removing softened paint from crevices. Use an aerosol paint remover to get into tight areas.

• Metal scraping utensils may gouge the wood. Use plastic ones instead. For difficult-to-loosen paint spots, reapply the remover.

Soft woods such as oak and pine have "valleys" of open grain where pigment may remain even after you have removed most of the old paint. Scrub these areas with a stubby brush that has been dipped in paint remover wash or denatured alcohol. Use a cotton cloth in the other hand to absorb the wash as you go along.

• Don't expect one coat of paint remover to remove three or four coats of old paint. You will probably need to apply additional coats of paint remover, sometimes in combination with aerosol paint remover, directly over the first coat of remover.

Furniture that has been "pickled" by having paint rubbed into the grain of wood, needs special attention. After treating the wood with paint remover, cover it with a 50/50 mixture of shellac and denatured alcohol using a brush. Let it set for a few days. Then remove the shellac/denatured alcohol mixture with another coat of paint remover.

• Once you have removed the old paint, immediately wash the wood with a commercial paint remover wash or denatured alcohol. Now you are ready to stain or finish.

**NOW THAT THE** drudgery is over, it's time to be creative. Don't feel limited by the wood grains you already have in your home. A mixture is quite satisfying.

Designers agree that an unmitigated sameness in a room's furniture does not amount to chic. And producing something unusual is far cheaper than purchasing a one-of-a-kind design.

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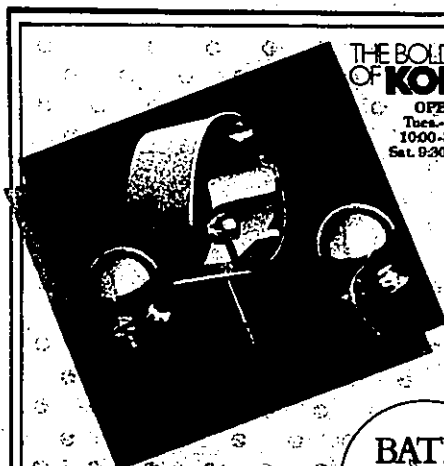
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