

Penetrating oils protect wood texture

(AP)- To protect wood without masking its natural texture, look to penetrating oils such as tung oil, linseed oil, Danish rubbing oil and wood bowl sealers. For maximum protection, use an oil finish that contains a resinlike urethane. As the oil soaks into the wood, the resin hardens forming a tough, resilient surface. In-surface oil finishes don't crack, chip, or flake off.

Work the oil into the bare wood with a soft rag or brush. Wait about 30 minutes for the wood to absorb the oil. Then, wipe the surface dry with a clean, lint-free rag, wait 30 minutes and apply a second coat. Build up a sheen by rubbing the surface with very fine (4/0) steel wool. Then, buff the wood with a soft, clean cloth.

Shellac, one of the world's oldest finishes still in use today, is derived from the resinous secretions of the lac bug, a small Asian insect. The resin is refined into dry flakes then dissolved in alcohol to form shellac. Because shellac has such a short shelf life, buy shellac flakes and alcohol to mix fresh shellac as you need it. Shellac is designated according to the proportion of shellac resin to alcohol, called the cut. For example, 1 pound of shellac dissolved in 1 gallon of alcohol produces 1-pound cut shellac. Liquid shellac comes premixed in 3-, 4-, or 5- pound cuts.

Shellac is sprayed or applied with a pad (French polishing) but brushing is the easiest way. Dilute it to a 1- or 2-pound cut. Brush with long strokes with the grain. Don't backbrush over the same area. It dries quickly and once it starts to dry, backbrushing leaves marks. Wait at least one hour before sanding with 220-grit paper. Six to eight coats work best. Rub them out with 3/0 steel wool for a satin finish.

Varnish combines oils and resins for a super-durable top coat that resists heat, water, alcohol, and abrasion well. It brushes smoothly and easily, but slow drying time lets dust settle in the finish. Natural varnish dries in 24 to 48 hours. It's classified by its oil-to-resin content - long-oil varnishes for tough marine and outdoor applications and short-oil for fine furniture. Synthetic varnishes with alkyd, vinyl, phenolic or polyurethane resins go on easier, last longer and dry faster.

Apply varnish with a top-quality natural bristle brush. Thin the first coat with mineral spirits. Sand this sealer coat lightly with 240-grit paper. Next, apply full-strength varnish in full stripes about a brush-width apart. Without dipping the brush back in the varnish, brush across the grain to spread it evenly over the entire surface. Wipe the brush clean of excess varnish

and "tip off" the surface to remove bubbles and leave it smooth. Hold the brush nearly vertical and make long, continuous strokes with the tips of the bristles. Apply two or three coats, sanding between coats with damp 240-grit paper to remove dust specks.

Clear lacquer is the top coat applied to most fine furniture. It's very hard, fast-drying, and resists water, alcohol, heat and mild acids. Although lacquer dries crystal-clear, it dries so quickly it's hard to apply. Spraying is ideal, but there are slower-drying brushing lac-

quers.

Seal the wood with sanding filler cut 50:50 with lacquer filler. Sand the surface lightly with 220-grit paper, wipe dust free and apply full strength lacquer in long, straight strokes. Overlap each successive stroke slightly. Don't backbrush over the same area. Apply two or more coats sanding between each with 280-grit wet/dry paper and oil. For a really lustrous finish on lacquer, shellac or varnish, rub the final coat with pumice stone or rottenstone.

Matthaei holds classes

Brush up on your gardening skills and pick up some how-to tips from a variety of adult education courses from the University of Michigan Matthaei Botanical Gardens.

For information, call (313) 998-7061. In "Classical Bonsai," 7-9 p.m. Mondays, April 29 and May 6 and 13, learn the ancient Oriental art of growing miniature trees in small containers. Jack Winkle, master in ornamental horticulture and a nationally known bonsai teacher, artist and writer, will teach potting, styling, pruning and daily care. Supplies will be available for purchase from the instructor. No prior experience is required. Cost is \$75.

Hikea Wednesdays, May 1, 8, 22 and 29, and Sunday, May 5, will take the inquisitive plant seeker to the more remote habitats of woods and wetlands. Edible plants and mushrooms, as well as the interesting plants and intriguing habitats of little-known and out-of-the-way places, will be emphasized in an academic but playful atmosphere. Stay another hour for lunch and review from time to time. Cost is \$85.

"More! Alert" will be offered 1-4 p.m. Sunday, April 28. The combination of a slide lecture and field trip is the perfect way to learn about the delicious edible morel mushrooms.

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