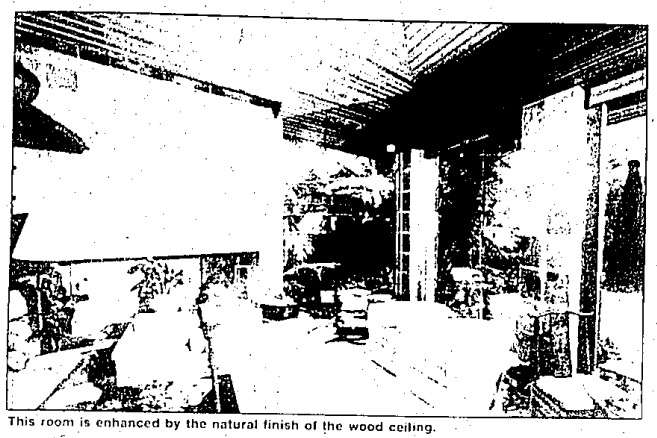
# Finish enhances wood



This room is enhanced by the natural finish of the wood ceiling.

To enhance and protect the natural beauty of wood, nothing can compare to a clear finish.

Clear finishes bring out texture and natural grain while sealing the wood's porous fibers from stains, moisture and dirt.

The most commonly used finishes include penetrating oil, shellac, varnish and lacquer. The finish you choose depends on ease of application, durability and desired appearance. Penetrating oil is an in-surface finish while shellac, varnish and lacquer are on-surface finishes.

Proper surface preparation is especially important when working with clear finishes since they won't hide scratches and nicks. In fact, a clear finish often highlights surface defects as it accentuates the wood's grain.

Fill small holes and gouges with wood putty (patching compound). Choose a putty color that matches the wood, but remember the putty will darken slightly when the finish is applied. Remove dried glue, scratches and any minor surface imperfections with a hand or cabinet scraper and/or abrasive paper. Remember, the finish will only be as smooth as the bare wood.

Coated abrasives (sandpaper) come in various grit sizes (coarseness) and types. The abrasive papers used in woodworking are coated with garnet, aluminum oxide and silicone carbide grits. Abrasives range from coarse to extra fine. The grit numbers, which range from 40 to 600, refer to the number of abrasive particles per linear inch. The grit number system is the most helpful and widely used today. A third less abrasive grading order is the 9-grade system — fine-grade paper (150-grit) is listed as 4/0.

THE POROUS surface of the open-grained woods such as oak, ash, mahogany and walnut must be filled in order to obtain a smooth, glass-like finish. If, however, you prefer to have the wood's texture show through the finish, then skip the grain-filling step. Paste wood filler (not to be confused with patching compound) is used to fill the wood pores.

Before application, thin the paste filler with benzene or naptha to the consistency of thick paint.

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