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**Boat Wax–Shine On**

**By James "Doc" Lewis**

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It has been our experience that nothing so much insures the beauty and longevity of a fiberglass boat than the continual maintenance of a good coat of high quality wax. In this article we will explore the preparation, methods, and best practices for the long term maintenance of your boats gel coat through the use of wax.

**The Problem**

Gel–coat, the exterior finish on fiberglass boats, is a porous mix of polyester resins and pigments that must be sealed from the damaging effects of salt, dirt, weather, and ultra–violet (UV) radiation.

The primary purpose of gel–coat is to protect the underlying core from water, air and sunlight, which in combination will quickly loosen the chemical bond and render the structure useless. Neglect this gel–coat, and it becomes more porous, resins oxidize and what remains is a faded, dull finish prone to absorbing water into the laminate and destroying it.

In addition to the above functional definition we also need to say a few words about the beauty factor, the shine of a newly polished and waxed boat. In a great example of form following function, gel–coat kept clean and shiny, with a good coat of wax, will perform it's primary function pretty much in direct proportion to the way it looks.

**The Players**

Now that we've named the problem, what are the choices for solving it? The simplest solution would, of course be to keep the boat away from sun, water, and oxygen. I said simple, not practical.

All of the "New", "Easy On–Easy Off", "Modern Chemical Miracle", products may look great on TV (we've tried them all too ;–) but in the real world of salt water, sun, fishing, spills, and air pollution,

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they simply don't hold up compared to the simple, natural, God made it, "Tree of Life", Brazilian No.1 Carnauba wax.

Unlike the modern marvels of chemical engineering, Carnauba comes from a tree, the Copernica Cerifera palm tree, to be specific. The color and quality of the wax are governed by the age of the leaves and care used in processing of this hard, brittle, lustrous wax. It runs from a golden yellow in color to nearly white and has an unmistakable but pleasant "tree" smell to it.

Due to the fact that carnauba is a natural plant by–product, it will not react with gel coat or painted surfaces. The Carnauba Wax acts as a protective barrier providing a very hard film over your boats surface that protect against sun and weather damage, airborne contaminates, such as acid rain, spills, fish remains, salt and bird droppings, etc.

Carnauba even swells and closes its pores tighter when exposed to water. In addition, Carnauba

dramatically reduces gel coat oxidation by diffusing the UV and infrared radiation from the sun which will oxidize and dull your boats finish.

Interesting Carnauba Facts Pure Carnauba in its natural state is harder than concrete. Typical retail waxes contain 3% to 5% Carnauba by volume. Less then 5% of retail Carnauba waxes contain Brazilian No.1 Carnauba, the finest of all waxes. The greater the concentration of Carnauba, the greater the level of protection and the higher the quality of shine.

How Does It Work?

3 things are needed in order for the chemical reaction which causes oxidation to occur. Oxygen  
Heat UV Radiation

Eliminate one or more of these and you slow the process.

A protective layer of Carnauba wax keeps airborne contaminants from reaching the gel–coat and starting a chemical reaction.

This wax layer diffuses (refracts) both UV and infrared radiation from the sun. Without it the radiation is absorbed by the pigment in the gel coat causing it to over heat, and trigger the chemical reaction that will dry out, dull and oxidize the surface.

A waxed boat will have a lower surface temperature than an unwaxed one. The darker the color, the greater the difference

Using a high quality paste wax applied over a clean polished surface will give you 3 to 4 months of protection here on the Emerald Coast. This doesn't mean the wax is gone in this time but the appearance and protection will begin to fade rapidly. (based on our own experience, independent testing, and the reports of most of our clients)

For more information on the properties of different waxes, please see Wax Comparison Table

### Tying It All Together

By keeping the wax protective layer up, (3–4 waxings per year) your boat will always look good and you shouldn't need any hard yearly compounding to keep it that way. This will save you money right now and add years to the time before the boat will need to be painted.

On the boats that we've maintained for several years we usually give it a thorough going over with a very fine compound in the spring just to give it that "bright" look. This removes only a very thin layer of oxidized pigment to give the wax a solid base to adhere to.

### Happy Boating!

James "Doc" Lewis has been "messin about in boats" for as long as he can remember. He is

owner/operator of BoatDocs1, a full–service boat detailing–yacht maintenance company serving the Emerald Coast region of Florida. To learn more about boats and keeping them looking their best visit his web site at:

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## **Think About The Right Boat Before Bying It**

### **By Jeff Miles**

The first thing you should know when choosing a boat is that no single boat will do everything. If your looking for a boat that inspires confidence, don't expect it to shine in light air. Boats that are exciting to sail on the weekends aren't the ideal boats for a passage through the ocean.

You shouldn't expect to find quick acceleration and load carrying capacity together with the same boat. You can buy a boat now to race or fish, then sail around later – as you can only do one or the other with a specific type of boat.

The logic to choosing the right boat is determining how you plan to use the boat. Think about why you want to own a boat, what you plan to do with it, and how you plan on using it.

For some, beauty is the first consideration. For sail boats beauty is very important, as you'll spend a majority of time floating and sailing around, with many people looking at your sail boat. With people

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looking at your vessel, you want to make sure that it looks nothing short of amazing.

If you are planning to race instead of cruise, then speed is your primary consideration. There are many cruising sailors out there who simply can't be happy unless their boats are moving very fast. The ideal boat for speed demons are those that can cut through the water, creating plenty of waves.

Fishermen on the other hand, want to look towards fishing boats. Trackers and other boats that are designed for fishing are ideal here. Fishing is one of the most popular boat activities, meaning that you'll have plenty of boats to select from.

When it comes down to it, selecting the right boat is up to you and what you plan to do with it. Take your time, weigh your options, and you'll have the right boat before you know it.

Are You Searching For A Catamaran, Yacht, Kayak Or Just Fishing Boats? Just visit Jeffs website at:

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