



Exterior Wood Finish Options

Raw Wood (no finish)

- Rot and insect resistant woods, such as Teak and Cedar can be left unfinished and in ground-contact for lengths of time.
- Wood will develop a patina from UV damage.
- Raw wood requires repair as it degrades and eventually fails structurally.

Drying Oil

- Drying oil does not resist marring as well as varnishes.
- This finish has a small moisture vapor barrier to reduce cracking, warping and checking.
- Drying oils reduce water penetration moderately.
- Tung Oil or boiled Linseed Oil requires 3 coats of application to achieve results.
- Use these only on items sheltered from direct sunlight, as Linseed Oil turns black in the sun.
- Oils build up soot from air pollution and require regular cleaning.
- The curing time for drying oils is several weeks.
- Clean and reapply the oil yearly.

Exterior Oil Finish (Mixture of drying oil, varnish and thinner)

- Intermediate protection between drying oil and exterior varnish.
- Linseed Oil based finishes may also blacken with sun exposure.
- Exterior oil finishes have a greater cost associated with them.
- Maintenance should be performed every 2 years for best results.

Varnish

- Varnish is esthetically pleasing and mar resistant.
- The price of varnish is typically high.
- Varnish should be sanded and applied every 3 years or as soon as it cracks.
- Apply Tung Oil based marine varnishes for items that are exposed to direct sun or liquid water.
- Clear varnish is subject to UV damage. Pigmented varnishes block UV radiation.

Stains

- Stains contain pigments to partially block UV light.
- Because they require less upkeep and cost, stains tend to last longer.
- Stains are generally not as esthetically pleasing.
- Semi-transparent stains should be maintained every 4-5 years while opaque stains last 5-7 years.
- Pigmented urethane Tung Oil is a good opaque stain.

Paint

- 2 Coats of quality exterior latex paint over an oil-based pigmented primer will provide the least upkeep.
- It's UV resistance, film stretch, moisture vapor barrier and lifespan is unbeatable compared to other projects.
- Paint should be maintained every 10 years.
- Paint does not provide a natural wood esthetic.

The Woodworker's Gazette: *Selecting an Exterior Finish, Part II.*

For more information, visit www.woodworking.org