

A Checkered Path

Each teak cleaner was tested on a section of weathered teak decking aboard our test boat, a 1978 Union 36. The boat's deck, which is exposed year-round, was recaulked and sanded in May 2006 and was last cleaned using a deck brush and fresh water six months prior to our test.

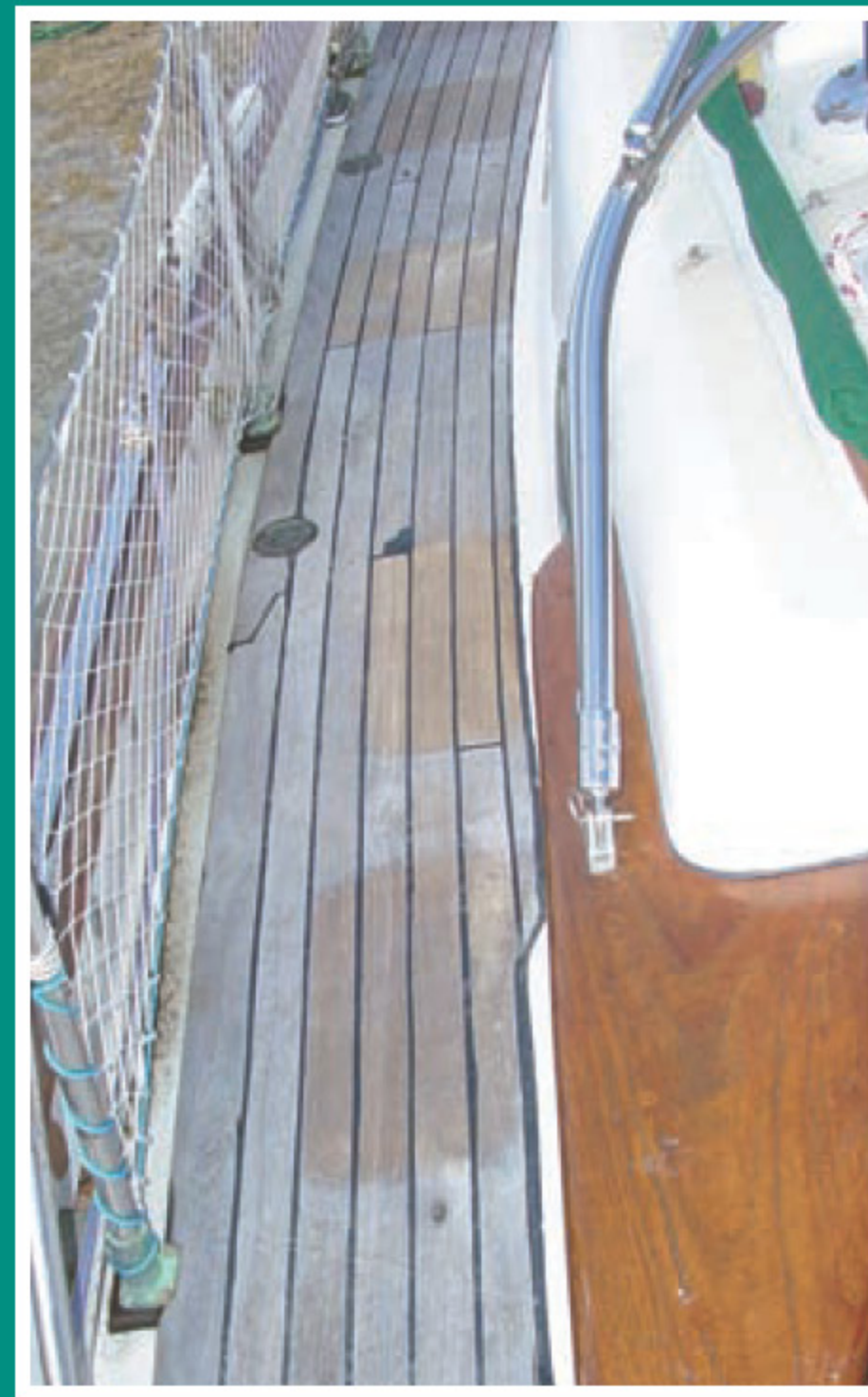
Testers applied each product following manufacturers' instructions. For ratings, testers considered each product's performance, harshness, ease of application, and price.

Because some of these products are rather harsh, proper protective clothing and eyewear are a must. We recommend wearing long sleeves, gloves, and glasses.

The first thing that became apparent while comparing the results of our test is that all of the products worked—each cleaned its assigned section of teak decking well. There were slight variations (Interlux and West Marine left the teak noticeably lighter in color for example, due to their added brightening properties), however all of them removed dirt and grime from the deck, leaving a nice, clean surface.

Once we determined that a ranking based solely on cleaning ability wouldn't work, testers decided to focus on other factors such as ease of application, chemical harshness, dwell time, environmental concerns, etc. For example, products that must be mixed require more preparation and time (however slight) than one that can be applied directly from the container. The same is true for a cleaner that requires a 10-minute dwell time versus one that a user can put on and take off immediately. On the flip side, many boaters may be perfectly content to wait that 10 minutes if the cleaner is more mild (meaning no worries about splashing it on adjacent gelcoat or painted surfaces), more gentle on the wood, cheaper, or more environmentally friendly. Also, having a concentrated formula like the *losso* means more washes per container—more clean for your buck.

So rather than choosing a Best Choice among teak cleaners, testers opted to recommend a few based on specific characteristics: the most economic (Budget Buy), the most eco-friendly, easiest to apply, etc.



We sectioned off the deck of a Union 36, turning it into a teak checkerboard. The after-most test patch was cleaned with Star brite Teak Cleaner, followed by an area cleaned with Interlux Premium Teak Restorer.