

PRODUCT UPDATES



Applying a wood finish straight from the can (above) might save time, but it can also shorten the shelf life. Lids for two-part products like Bristol Finish (below) should be wiped clean before re-sealing.

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Wood Finishes: Extending the Shelf Life

*P*ractical Sailor has fielded several queries regarding the shelf life of the products in our ongoing wood finish test, which includes varnishes, wood treatments, and oils. As a few readers have pointed out, to pay \$30 for a quart of finish in the spring, only to find out its useless for a fall recoat is infuriating.

Unopened and stored in a dry place at room temperature, a container of most of the varnishes and wood finishes we tested will last anywhere from three to five years. However, some unlined metal cans will corrode surprisingly fast. Semco, for example, switched to improved cans several years ago after some cans appeared to be rusting from the inside. *PS* editors have also experienced this with some varnishes. Keep in mind that even though a product appears a slightly different color after some time in the can, it may be fine once applied. It is good to try a test patch before throwing out a batch.

Once a container is opened, a multi-year shelf life is not guaranteed, but there are things you can do to preserve the product for another season:

- Store it in a cool dry place with the cap tightly sealed.
- When using the product, avoid introducing contaminants into the can by pre-mixing and then pouring it into another pot for application.
- Meticulously clean the lid and lip before closing. The catalyst containers for two-part finishes Bristol Finish and Honey Teak, for example, can cement shut.
- Reduce the amount of air left in the can. You can put the remains in a smaller can (available at most paint stores). We've also heard of people putting marbles in the can to raise the level of the varnish back to the top.

