Take care of that wood-work

H M. Gloster
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"I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree."

In these oft-quoted lines, Joyce Kilmer expressed a thought which many of us may have cherished. Most of us are tree-lovers and few people can witness the felling of a forest giant without a pang of regret. It is consoling to reflect however that "tree-butcher"—the wasteful exploitation of forest resources—is largely a thing of the past.

In most countries of the world, forestry is a highly-specialised profession aimed at preserving our forests for all time as the source of successive "crops" of timber. The removal of mature and over-mature trees is scientifically undertaken to give younger growth the best possible chance of satisfactory development, and reforestation programmes are planned to ensure adequate supplies of timber for future generations.

Good timber is worthy of care. Much of it can give good service for centuries—a fact that has been demonstrated on numerous occasions by historic buildings and antique furniture.

HARDWOOD HERITAGE

Here in Western Australia we are fortunate in possessing hardwoods which are the envy of other countries throughout the world. Visitors from overseas are amazed to see these splendid timbers being used for many purposes for which softwoods are generally employed in other lands. Many of our timbers are intrinsically beautiful and are seen at their best when merely polished or treated with clear varnish; processes which enhance the attractive colour and graining while at the same time aiding in preservation. Where the natural wood is too dark to suit the general scheme of decoration, suitable paints may be used. Be sure to use one of the well-known brands and follow the maker's recommendations regarding primers, undercoats, etc. Steer clear of cheap paints—they usually prove costly in the long run.

OILING WOOD FLOORS

Hardwood floors should be sanded to a smooth surface, swept perfectly clean and then given a generous dressing of raw linseed oil which should be allowed to soak well into the wood fibres.
In the case of external verandahs, raw linseed oil is still the best dressing, but where the cost is a deciding factor, many people use sump oil thinned down with kerosene. Do not be too liberal with this dressing, otherwise the surface will have an unsightly coating of oil and dust.

**POLISHING**

A good polish enhances the appearance of a floor by emphasising the beauty of the wood grain. It also preserves the wood and makes subsequent house-cleaning much easier.

There are many excellent proprietary polishes, most of which include wax, linseed oil and turpentine in their list of ingredients. Many housewives have their own pet recipes. A friend of mine uses equal parts of raw linseed oil, turpentine and vinegar for jarrah floors and certainly achieves good results with this mixture—plus plenty of “elbow-grease,” applied in these days by an electric polisher.

Cheap polishes are seldom economical as they are made from inferior ingredients. This home-made floor cream is reasonably inexpensive and produces an excellent shine.


¼ pint Turpentine.

½ pint boiling water.

1 tablespoon Cloudy Ammonia.

**Note.**—The best turpentine is the vegetable oil obtained from pine-trees. So-called “mineral turpentine” is a by-product of the petroleum industry and is less effective in polishes.

**Method.**

1. Shred the wax into a tin or jar with a lid, add the turpentine, and leave covered in a cool place for about a week. If extra heat is needed to dissolve the wax, stand the container in near boiling water.

*Do not bring near fire or flame as turpentine is highly inflammable.*

2. Stir the half-pint of boiling water into the turpentine-wax mixture.

3. Add the cloudy ammonia gradually and beat until the mixture is thick and creamy. The quantity of ammonia needed may vary slightly according to the strength of the preparation.

4. Store in a closed jar or tin for use as required.

**ON APPLYING POLISH**

Make sure that the floor is perfectly clean and that the initial oil dressing has been thoroughly absorbed. Sweep thoroughly using a small brush to remove dust from corners. It should not be necessary to wash the floor, but grease-stains, etc., should be removed by the use of turpentine or methylated spirit.

Apply polish sparingly, rubbing it well into the boards, and then polish with a soft cloth or soft polishing brush until the shine appears.

Avoid heavy applications of polish in the corners and on other little-used portions of the floor.

**FURNITURE POLISH**

A cheap and effective polish for furniture may be made by mixing the following ingredients:

- 2 parts raw linseed oil.
- 2 parts turpentine.
- 1 part methylated spirit.
- 1 part vinegar.

This may be bottled and will keep indefinitely. Shake well before using. Besides preserving and beautifying the woodwork, this polish will discourage attacks by insects.

Before applying, see that the furniture is free from dust and spillage stains. If necessary, wash with warm water to which a tablespoonful of vinegar is added to each quart of water.

Dry thoroughly before applying polish with a soft rag and here again, apply the polish sparingly but be liberal with the “elbow grease.”

Old velvet or velveteen garments can be cut up to make excellent polishing cloths for furniture. Do most of the polishing by rubbing in the same direction as the grain of the wood.

**PAINTED AND UNPAINTED WOODWORK**

Paintwork should be dusted and wiped thoroughly with a soft cloth dipped in warm soapy water and wrung out. Stains should be lightly rubbed with one of the proprietary “no-scratch” cleaners. Rinse with clear water and wipe dry.
Plain white pine has largely been superseded in modern homes by the various labour-saving and attractively colourful materials such as laminex and formica.

If you wish to keep white pine woodwork attractive use clean cold or lukewarm water and one of the well-known proprietary cleansers—hot water sends grease deep into the wood fibres.

Scrub thoroughly, working along the grain of the wood. Rinse in clean cold water and dry as quickly as possible. Remember that wood allowed to absorb too much water frequently warps in drying.

Fencing new land? Subdivide it into large natural areas for clearing and developing by fencing along creeks or rocky ridges. Later, when the topography and possible water supplies are better known, the subdivision into smaller paddocks can be planned without inconvenience caused by existing fences. The trees in this photograph mark the course of a large creek and the farmer who owns the land has erected his fence along this natural waterway where it does not interfere with cultivation.

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