

Wax Test Results

Collinite paste wax takes top honors, with a handful of other pastes on its heels. Two non-waxes—Poli-Glow and West Marine Teflon—also did well. The liquids started strong but faded.

On Aug. 3, 2003, Powerboat Reports placed outdoors a tired old fiberglass panel to which had been applied 26 kinds of waxes, along with one liquid plastic and one Teflon coating. The object of this test was to determine which, if any, of the finishes—hand-applied to the weathered panel—would restore some gloss and last a full year. Which products would provide protection for the gelcoat for 12 months, and even still have a bit of shine left?

The topsides of a fiberglass boat can remain new-looking for years—if kept clean and coated with something that resists weathering. New gelcoat seems as impervious as glass, but it isn't; it's porous, and gets more porous as it ages. If left uncoated, bare gelcoat picks up stains that are very difficult to remove.

(In the July issue, PBR published a report on seven often-used waterline stain removers. All are harsh, acid-based cleaners. The winners were Aurora, Davis FSR, and Y-10. Even worse for gelcoat are abrasive cleaners.)

The test described here is an attempt to show that a good quality coating, applied once a year, may avoid gelcoat damage.

The panel had been washed, scrubbed, rinsed repeatedly, and thoroughly dried. Each product was applied as directed (except for several that called for multiple coats) to small circles.

Each circle was delineated by a black inked line made with a Sanford #13601 "Industrial Super Permanent" felt-tipped pen. As we shall see, the marker, which on the body says "remains permanent under most chemical washes, and extreme heat and steam (up to 500°F)," was not at all permanent. But the marker's failure turned out to be handy.

After being hung outdoors, the panel was eyed often (who could resist?) during its 365 days of exposure to New England's rain, snow, sun, and wind. Because this was a long-term test, the panel wasn't brought indoors until Aug., 3, 2004, for a final, close examination.

The Winners

It was easy to spot the winners. Most inked circles were badly faded; some were barely discernible. However, on some inked circles the ink was more intact—meaning that the ink, as well as the gelcoat, had been protected by the coating, which had extended over the inked lines. Some of the products did a poor job of protecting the inked rings as well as the gelcoat beneath. (The coatings did not extend out to cover the numbers on the circles.)

Based on how well the inked rings were preserved, the best results were with circles #3 (Collinite paste



The 26 waxes—arranged in a clockwise spiral. Our fiberglass test panel was left outside for one year in New England.

wax), #4 (Turtle paste), #11 (BoatLIFE's paste), #12 ((Meguir's Mirror Glaze, which is a paste), #20 (Starbrite's paste), #21 (Starbrite softened paste), #25 (3M's paste), and #28 (West Marine's paste). Note that all of these are paste waxes.

Two non-wax coatings did well, too. They were #15 (the Poli Glow liquid plastic) and #26 (West Marine's Teflon). Next came the beading, which was tested by spraying a fine mist on each circle. On most, the accumulated water simply ran off in small streams, with none remaining in place. However, six of our test specimens did very well. They included the aforementioned Poli Glow and West Marine's Teflon, but neither was as good as the best paste wax.

The other four—all paste waxes—were, starting with the best, the Collinite, Meguir's Mirror Glaze, 3M's paste (which is called Ultra Performance), and West Marine's paste.



Collinite's Fleetwax takes the top prize. Other strong performers: Meguir's Mirror Glaze, 3M's Ultra Performance, and West Marine's paste.

Liquids

It is interesting to note that in the initial examination of the gloss, when the coatings were first applied, only five rated Excellent, and that all five were liquids. After 12 months' exposure, as indicated by both the ink protection and the beading test, no liquid was as good as the paste waxes. The conclusion has to be that the liquids lack legs.

We favor wax. And paste wax is best, primarily because it goes on thicker. Wax discolors, like anything else, but can be removed with a good household cleaner like Fantastic. Paste wax is hard to apply and polish out, but preserving that precious gelcoat as long as possible makes it worth the effort. If done once a year in the northern climes, or every six months in the tropics, a wax like Collinite can keep gelcoat looking like new for a dozen or more years.

www.powerboat-reports.com
For questions about your order or subscription,
please email us at: [Powerboat Reports Customer Service](#)
Or call us at: 800/424-7887
Copyright Belvoir Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.
[Privacy Policy](#)