

# Long-term Teak Oil “Test”

by Wayne Strausbaugh

Oiling teak decks can enhance their beauty and longevity. Excessive cleaning shortens deck life by removing the soft grain. If teak decks can maintain their oiled look for over a year with no maintenance, their upkeep can rival or exceed normally, low-maintenance fiberglass decks.

Now before you read further, be aware that no salt water touched my decks during this test. Salt water is the nemesis of teak oil and usually makes it disappear quickly. When I first switched to this formula 3 years ago, I spent some time at sea with lots of water on deck with little apparent degradation. But I took no pictures nor documented the affects of salt water. Therefore, consider this test valid for fresh water conditions only.

I have been oiling the teak decks on my boat for over 23 years. I started with Teak Wonder but was unhappy with the longevity of the oil and the darkening of the decks as it wore off. Trapping dirt, the decks took on a blackish tint as they got dirty – sometimes in as little as 2 months. Salt water seemed to wash almost all traces of oil off the deck. In 1995, I heard about combining Teak Wonder and Semco Natural. This became my standard for 7 years. The improvement in longevity was dramatic with the oiled look lasting for a year with almost no maintenance. The biggest drawback was the tendency for the decks to turn green with mildew in areas not subjected to much sun.

Three years ago, I added Olympic Deck Stain (Caramel color) to the mix. The primary worry with any stain is uneven wear. A boater using Semco Gold commented on the tendency for the tint to wear off in sunlit and traffic areas while looking almost new in protected and shaded areas. The result was a splotchy deck that required extensive stripping prior to recoating. It also took a lot of scrubbing to get the decks looking one color. This didn't occur with the Olympic stain.

Maintenance: during this 15-month period, the decks were hosed down occasionally except for one very light brushing with a deck brush at the 9-month point. The painted topsides were washed with soap, which ran off over the decks. Over 85 inches of rain fell. Thirty bungs were replaced and sanded flush. Hundreds of other bungs were sanded flush with the deck after wear caused them to project up a bit. Very little sanding was required. No additional teak oil was added. And nothing was done to prolong the teak oil. As a liveaboard, I transited the high-traffic area (see picture) at least 5000 times.

The pictures show that the teak oil treatment lasted quite well.

- 1) The decks still look good after 15 months, showing a faded but distinct fresh-teak color. There is almost no green mildew.

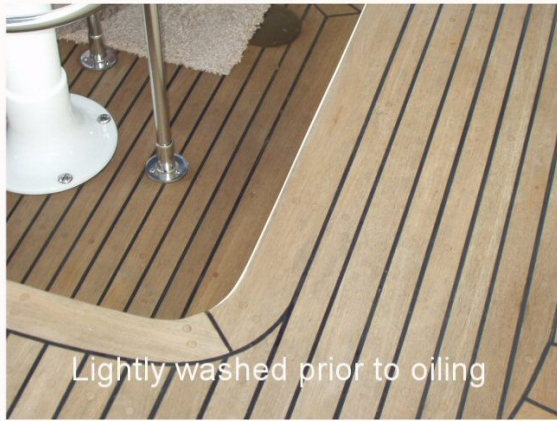
- 2) The wear is consistent over the whole deck. No buildups remain in shaded areas.
- 3) Additional oil can be put on after a quick cleaning with a long-handled brush and some soap (Joy). Prep time could be as little as 2 hours of work. Two coats are recommended. The teak oil mix tends to cover some gray on decks not thoroughly scrubbed. Acids are not required for deck prep.
- 4) The oil is best brushed on with a foam brush with frequent stirring of the oil mixture. It can be wiped on with a rag but some color loss will be noted and 2 coats will definitely be required.
- 5) The sanding done to the teak bungs became impossible to see after a few weeks. The stain seemed to penetrate far enough to give the decks the ability to handle normal bung and seam maintenance without having to redo the oil.
- 6) This treatment may be appropriate for teak trim as well



The bow area saw the most sun and weathered more



An awning covered the stern during the 5 hottest months. It looked significantly better than the bow area.

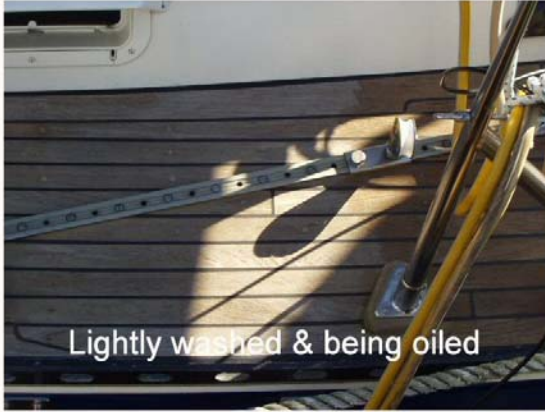


Lightly washed prior to oiling



15 months - No maintenance

The cockpit area is covered and stayed dry. The teak oil here will last years.



Lightly washed & being oiled



15 months - No maintenance

Walked on at least 5000 times during this test, traffic areas showed almost no wear.



**Worst weathering in 15 months**

These are the worst areas found. Still very acceptable...

Teak oil used: 1/3<sup>rd</sup> Teak Wonder  
1/3<sup>rd</sup> Semco Natural  
1/3<sup>rd</sup> Olympic Deck Stain (Caramel color)

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