

Woodturning Tips

Storing Finish: Water and Oil

I read with interest Robert Jay's tip on preserving unused finish (AW vol 26, no 4). I use a different method, told to me by David Ellsworth. Water is heavier than oil and does not mix with it. Simply pour water into the partially used oil finish container until there is virtually no room for air (oxygen). Without oxygen, the finish will be preserved.

I used one of my wife's spice jars (don't tell her) to illustrate the separation of a quantity of Watco dark oak oil finish and water. I took the photograph one minute after pouring water over the oil. The oil on the top is easily available for a brush or rag or to be poured out.

The oxygen dissolved in the water, about a thimble full per quart of water, is not readily available to the finish. I have used this method successfully with Watco finishes, tung oil, and Waterlox. Assuming that water is not very expensive in your area, this method is economical, as well as convenient.

~ Denis Bourke, Maryland

