

Treating Projects with Wood Dye, Spray Finish and Liming Wax

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For a very stark and dramatic finish, the author uses a combination of spray-on finish and liming wax.

I often use this stain and liming-wax finishing technique on ash because it takes advantage of its bold grain pattern and makes for a very dramatic look.

You will need some type of ring-porous wood. Ash and oak work the best, with ash being my favorite. It gives consistently good results. The more curves you use in your project, the more the grain shows up! Supplies: some sort of wood dye, spray finish, liming wax and #0000 steel wool. I used Solar-Lux™ brand (made by Behlens), bloodred colored, alcohol-based dye. Make sure you use a dye, not a stain — a stain won't work for this type of finishing process. You could also use leather dye or India ink or a waterbased dye.

For the spray finish, I used Deft® brand semi-gloss lacquer.

The liming wax is a white wax that comes in a can. The Woodturners Catalog carries a brand made by Liberon. For Dan's bottle opener, I used gold powder mixed into the white liming wax. You can also experiment with using shoe polish or acrylic paint instead of liming wax. I've had mixed results with those items, but others have had dramatic success with acrylic paint.

For whatever project you are making, sand the wood down to at least 200-grit abrasive. Everyone has discovered the hard way that sanding scratches show up far too vividly when dye or stain is applied!



Let the stain soak with the dye, longer for deeper colors, and then let it dry for several hours, overnight if possible.

Apply the dye. I saturate the wood for a deep color. Let the dye dry for several hours.

Sand slightly with #0000 steel wool. This leaves the surface smooth and reduces the sanding that's required later. Gently wipe the surface to clean off dust and steel wool debris.



The author uses a spray finish to seal the wood, which usually leaves the pores open, if they close and the finish starts to run use a pin to prick them back open.

Spray the object. I generally apply two medium coats of spray finish. The objective is to seal the wood but still leave the open pores open.



Once the project's stain has been sealed, use steel wool to sand it down and prepare it for the liming wax.

After the finish is dry, sand very lightly with #0000 steel wool. Take care not to rub hard, so you don't break through the lacquer.



Applying the liming wax to your project, wearing gloves to take care not to let any penetrate your skin, rubbing it gently into the wood.

Apply the liming wax, rubbing it gently into the pores. Before the wax dries too much, wipe the excess off with a soft cloth or paper towel; don't rub hard. Again, use #0000 steel wool to gently remove the remaining residue of liming wax. The liming wax will remain imbedded in the open pores, yet will be removed from the surface of the rest of the wood.



Wipe off the excess wax with a paper towel, then do one more gentle pass over the wood with your steel wool.

This finishing technique has been around for many years. The only drawback I've discovered is that it's somewhat difficult to refinish a scratched piece. Dye, finish and wax can create an unlimited variety of color combinations. It works best for smaller projects or those that won't be subjected to a lot of wear. I challenge you to try it on your next project!