

# FINISHING SECRETS

## Applying top coats with a Deft touch

RUSS FAIRFIELD

USE A LOW-TO-NO GLOSS FINISH ON nearly all of my turnings, either “as is”, or as a base for a tung-varnish-turpentine blend. Yes, they are all compatible. And the materials usually can be found at local home centers, paint or hardware stores. The finish can also be applied on the lathe or off, but off-lathe, you will have to rub harder and faster.

### The 3 Secrets To A Good Finish

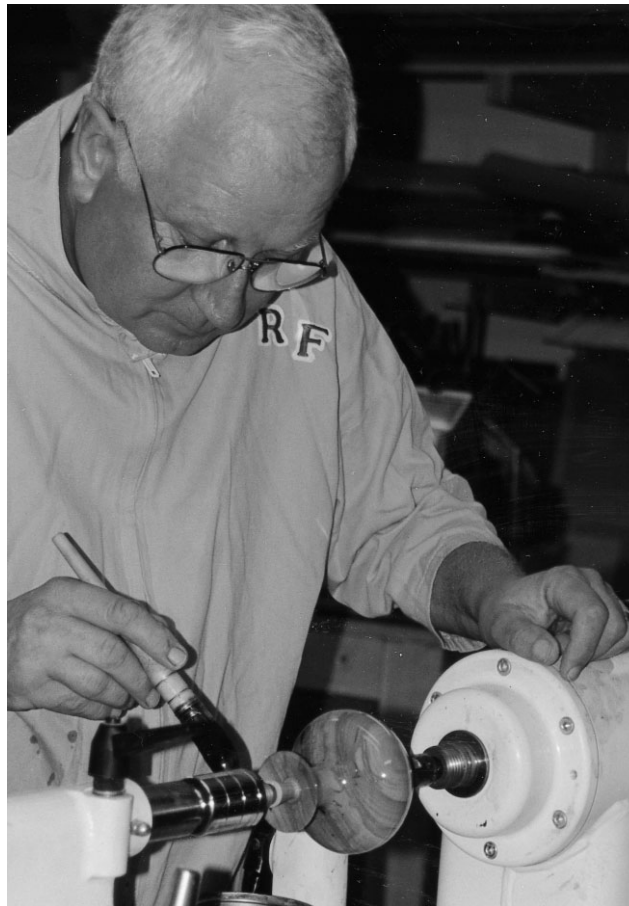
**First** — There is no such thing as a “quick finish.” This one is no exception. The Deft® lacquer is quickly applied, but the surface sanding and preparation takes considerable time.

**Second** — The more you sand, the more you need to sand. As the surface becomes smoother, the smaller the scratches and blemishes that you can see.

**Third** — The entire surface must receive the same preparation and finish. Once a sanding and finishing sequence has been established, all of the steps must be repeated whenever we go back to a coarser grit to make a surface repair. If any steps in the sequence are skipped, that area will stand out after the final finish is applied because its texture and absorbency are different.

Following the above guides, I developed a sequence of steps that will consistently lead to a good finish. I have demonstrated this approach to my local turning group, and many members report good success.

- Step 1 — Thoroughly sand all surfaces using any combination of power and hand-sanding. Don't skip any grits. I power sand with a 3-in. disc on outside and a 2-in. disc on inside curves using 80, 120, 180, 220, 280, and 320 grits, always cleaning and checking the surface before moving to the next finer grit. Then, with the lathe off, I hand sand with a 320



Russ Fairfield applies his low gloss finish.

grit.

- Step 2— Apply and leave a heavy coat of Watco Liquid Finishing Wax to accent and raise the grain. It also accents surface flaws.

- Step 3 — With the lathe OFF, hand-sand with 400-grit wet/dry. Wipe the surface clean.

- Step 4 — With the lathe at 500 RPM, burnish the surface with a piece of grocery bag paper.

- Step 5— With the lathe OFF, apply a full sloppy coat of Deft® semi-gloss lacquer. I use a soft mop-brush, sometimes a paper towel.

- Step 6— Wait about 2 minutes, rotating the lathe occasionally by hand. Then remove all of the Deft® with soft paper towels (I prefer

VIVA), changing as they become wet and sticky. If the surface dries, dampen a towel with some thinner and continue rubbing.

- Step 7 — With the lathe running at 500 RPM, burnish the surface with a clean paper towel. Generating a little heat helps. The finish will now be dry. With the lathe OFF, lightly buff the surface with one of those gray ScotchBrite® pad, fine Bronze Wool, or 0000-steel wool to remove any traces of dried lacquer and any circular marks from the surface. I prefer Bronze Wool: it cuts better, leaves a scratch-free finish, doesn't stain or discolor light woods, and is oil-free.

If this will be the final finish, you can

apply a second coat by repeating Steps 5 thru 7. Just don't wait before wiping the surface in Step 6.

For a bit more gloss, the surface can be polished with Rottenstone, applied with Lemon Oil and a felt pad. Clean and polish with a soft cloth (old tee-shirts are perfect).

- Step 8 — Apply 2 coats of a good quality paste finishing wax. I prefer Trewax®. It is durable, takes a soft polish, is fairly resistant to water spotting, and economical.

Finally, remove the piece from the lathe and finish the bottom.

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*Russ Fairfield is a woodturner and a member of the North Florida Woodturners*