



To Shine and Protect

Collinite 870 tops the list of still-glossy cleaner/waxes after three months.

PS testers ditched the buffer and applied 11 one-step cleaner/polishes to three boats, including the Hunter 25 pictured here. After three months, five products stood out for cleaning ability, gloss, and water-beading action.

Amazingly, there are still mar-keteers who tout fiberglass as a maintenance-free material. It is, as any sailor knows, anything but. Deterioration begins as soon as a hull emerges from the factory shadows. The blessed sunlight that makes sailing such a pleasure immediately begins gnawing away at any unprotected gelcoat, the mixture of resin and pigment that is a fiberglass boat's front-line defense against the elements.

Ultraviolet rays and oxygen speed up the oxidation process, which literally wears away the gelcoat's binding resins, leaving only pigments behind. When you drag your hand across the surface of a heavily oxidized hull, the chalky substance you're picking up is actually the remaining pigment particles.

Waxes and polishes combat oxidation by sealing out oxygen and, in some cases, inhibiting UV rays. For 30-plus years, one of the most engrossing projects here at *Practical Sailor* has been searching for the ideal armor for gelcoat— inexpensive, easy to apply, and long-lasting.

Typically, restoring and protecting an oxidized hull is a two-step process,

compounding with a mild abrasive, followed by waxing. The last time we looked at waxes ("Wax Test Results" Nov. 15, 2004), we looked at products whose primary purpose was to serve as a protective coating after any old wax, unbound pigment particles, dirt, grime, and oil had been removed by compounding and polishing. This time, we looked for the lazy-man's approach—so-called one-step cleaner/waxes that combine the compounding and waxing processes.

Although many products call themselves cleaner/waxes, the directions on most of the products we tested call for a clean and dry hull before applying. This just means you should rinse off surface dirt before applying the product to keep the grit from scratching the gelcoat. The cleaning action in a one-step cleaner/wax is primarily a mildly abrasive scrub aimed at removing oxidation, deep stains, grease, or oil that can't be removed by detergents, a sponge, or a brush.

WHAT WE TESTED

We gathered 11 one-step products for this test, all of them aimed at the

"marine" market, which means we can probably find similar (if not the same) products for less money at local automotive stores or major retailers. Once we find our best in this field, we'll jump into the non-marine world to find a worthy competitor (any suggestions from readers are welcome). These dual-purpose products combine cleaning and polishing materials (a wetting agent, mild abrasives, and surfactants to dissolve oils) and protective sealing agents (typically a carnauba wax or polymer coating), and, in most cases, a UV inhibitor. Unfortunately, nearly all of them have petroleum-based ingredients. Most of the manufacturers told us that their "one-step" products will not last as long as their premium wax or polish, but offer a good alternative for those who want to protect their boat, but could do without the exertion of a buff-and-wax routine. (In other words, these products are aimed squarely at the shirkers among us who just want to get on the water and are quite content with a less-than-perfect finish.)

Not surprisingly, our test group featured several manufacturers with a history in the automotive wax/polish

HOW WE TESTED

Wax On, Wax Off

Testers applied the same 11 test products to three different boats in the course of this test. For our long-term test, we applied the waxes—following each product's instruction—to 6-inch by 6-inch, taped off sections at the sheer work of a 25-foot 1980 Hunter sailboat with moderate oxidation. For comparison, the remainder of the hull was compounded with a mild rubbing compound and then waxed with Collinite 885, the winner of the PS 2003 wax test.

To test the one-step products' cleaning ability and ease of application over a larger area, we applied them to our 21-foot Parker powerboat, which had a healthy dose of rust stains, yellow-brown waterline stains, and even tire marks—post hurricane scars. Finally, to see whether any products were more effective on colored hulls, or a severely oxidized hull, we applied each one to 3-foot-long topside sections of a 1974 O'Day Javelin that is about one season short of a paint job. All three test boats were left to endure the Florida sun and rain, either at a dock or on a trailer.

To evaluate initial gloss, five observers, two of them professional polishers, were asked to rank the top five finishes. After three months, three PS editors evaluated each section's glossiness. The



From left: Collinite 870, Meguiar's 50, Re-Structure Marine Polish, Meguiar's 67, 3M Fiberglass Cleaner Wax, 3M Clean & Shine, Interlux Premium, West Marine One Step, Starbrite Cleaner Wax, and Simoniz.

hulls were sprayed and dried repeatedly with a fine mist sprayer to check for beading (oil or dirt on the surface may prevent beading of an otherwise intact wax). Each of our test products is designed to bead water, so beading—or lack thereof—is a good indicator of the wax's integrity. However, it is interesting to note that water beading is not necessarily the mark of a good finish. Some automotive finishes deliberately inhibit beading so as to prevent watermarks.

market (Collinite, Simoniz, Meguiar's), or like West Marine and Interlux, are household names in marine maintenance. The one unfamiliar name was Re-Structure Marine, a company based in California that makes some pretty bold claims (three years of protection!) regarding its new products, which they say uses nanotechnology (science that controls matter on a scale smaller than one micrometer). Several manufacturers offer one-step clean and wax products that are more abrasive than the ones we tested, but we tried to keep the field limited and didn't want to unduly buff off good gelcoat, an important consideration for any boat owner.

Most of our test products were thick liquids in squeeze-top bottles: 3M Marine Fiberglass Cleaner and Wax, Meguiar's 67 One Step Compound, Meguiar's 50 Cleaner Wax, and Re-Structure Marine Products Professional. Two were pourable liquids: Collinite's 870 Super Heavy Duty Fleetwax and Interlux Premium Teflon Marine Wax with Cleaner. We also had one spray, 3M Clean and Shine Wax Enhancer, and one paste, Simoniz Royale Marine Cleaner/Wax. We also tested the Interlux Premium Teflon Marine Wax in combination with its UV Protectant & Teflon Wax Sealer, which

is to be applied after the cleaner/wax. Technically, this makes a two-step process, but hey, a sample of the sealer came free with the bottle of wax, and we were curious. (But after applying each product by hand to three different boats—see "How We Tested"—we were happy to keep the number of steps to a minimum.)

WHAT WE FOUND

After three months, the lazy man's route was looking pretty good. Our top five one-step polishes were holding up just as well as a premium two-step finish (Collinite 885, which was our top pick in the wax test) that was applied to one of our test boats at the same time as the test products.

Five products that stood out for their cleaning ability, gloss, and their ability to bead water: Starbrite Cleaner Wax, Collinite Special Heavy Duty Fleetwax, Re-Structure Marine Products Professional Marine Polish, Meguiar's 50 Cleaner Wax, and Simoniz Royale Marine Cleaner/Wax. The three-month results are summarized in the following text and chart. Stay tuned for the six-month update.

COLLINITE 870

Touted as "almost indestructible," Col-

linite 870 is a runny liquid that comes in a screw-top bottle. It was the second-most expensive product in our test, and its pour application and thin consistency made it slightly messier to work with. Testers were briefly stumped by Collinite's instructions that suggested using a Turkish towel. (From a Turkish bath, perhaps?) We chose to use a terry-cloth towel, but a cloth diaper would work as well.

Bottom Line: This was the only one-step tested that was unanimously rated the best initial finish. It also seemed to take less effort to achieve that gloss. And the shine has held up well after three months.

INTERLUX PREMIUM

Like the Collinite, the Interlux Premium Teflon Marine Wax with Cleaner is a runny liquid that is slightly messier to apply than the pastes. This is the only product in our test that touts Teflon (a Dupont trademark that requires paying royalties to use in marketing). However, several other products (Collinite 870 among them) use the chemical equivalent, PTEF.

Our first application left a hazy swirl mark—like the kind you'd leave on a hastily washed window or mirror—visible from about 1 foot away. We

PS VALUE GUIDE ONE-STEP CLEANER-WAXES

MAKER	INTERLUX	INTERLUX	★ COLLINITE	★ STAR BRITE	RE-STRUCTURE MARINE PROD.	WEST MARINE	MEGUIAR'S	MEGUIAR'S	3M	3M	SIMONIZ
PRODUCT	Premium Teflon Marine Wax & Cleaner	UV Protectant and Teflon Wax Sealer	No. 870	Heavy Duty One Step Cleaner Wax	Professional Marine Polish	One Step Fiberglass Cleaner Wax	67 One Step Compound	50 Cleaner Wax	Fiberglass Cleaner Wax	Clean and Shine Wax	Royale Boat Cleaner/Wax
PRICE (COST PER OUNCE)	\$10 (.60¢/oz.)	\$10 (.60¢/oz.)	\$16 (\$1/oz.)	\$22 (.69¢/oz.)	\$30 (\$2.50/oz.)	\$13 (.81¢/oz.)	\$22.50 (.70¢/oz.)	\$13 (.81¢/oz.)	\$15 (.94¢/oz.)	\$12 (.80¢/oz.)	\$7 (.78¢/oz.)
PRICE SOURCE	defender.com	defender.com	waxbytes.com	amazon.com	re-structuremarine.com	westmarine.com	meguiars.com	defender.com	defender.com	defender.com	jamestowndistributors.com
TYPE	Liquid paste	Liquid	Liquid	Liquid paste	Liquid paste	Liquid	Liquid paste	Liquid paste	Liquid paste	Spray	Paste
APPLICATION	Good	Poor (2-steps)	Fair	Good	Good	Fair	Good	Good	Good	Good	Excellent
CLEANING	Fair	NA	Good	Excellent	Good	Fair	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Fair	Excellent
INITIAL GLOSS	Fair	Good	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Good
3-MONTH GLOSS	Fair	Fair	Excellent	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	Good	Good	Fair	Good
3-MONTH WATER BEAD	Fair	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Poor	Excellent	Poor	Poor	Excellent

§ Budget Buy ✓ Recommended ★ Best Choice

reapplied the product the following day on a different section of the hull, and had the same results. On an adjacent taped-off section of the boat, we applied the UV Protectant & Teflon Wax Sealer with slightly better results. At the three-month mark, only the section with the sealer still beaded water. (See pictures, p. 31)

Bottom Line: Middle-of-the-road performance. If you are going to use this product, use the UV Protectant and Teflon Wax Sealer as well.

3M CLEAN AND SHINE

We haven't had much luck with spray-and-wipe waxes (pastes have long been a PS favorite for durability), but we figured maintenance-giant 3M might have the expertise to pull it off with its Clean and Shine Wax Enhancer.

Carnauba wax is one of this product's listed ingredients. It was the only product that allowed applica-

tion on a wet hull, which made the product even more appealing. Hose the boat down, spray, wipe and voila! Too good to be true?

Bottom Line: This was an unexceptional cleaner. It left a moderate gloss that did not last to the three-month mark. Like the Interlux wax sealer, it seems this is best used over previously waxed surfaces.

3M CLEANER AND WAX

With the thickest consistency of the flip-top bottle products, 3M Marine's Fiberglass Cleaner and Wax, required vigorous shaking to dispense easily. Combining a light rubbing compound and a blend of carnauba and other waxes, it was one of the few products that directed us to "rub aggressively using straight, short strokes." It also told us not to let the product dry to a haze before wiping away: Just keep rubbing until the material is gone. Most of the other

test products advised applying in a circular motion, letting it dry, wiping, then buffing. This product also comes in paste.

Bottom Line: This was a more vigorous cleaner than the Collinite or Interlux, and the finish rated high for initial gloss. Though it retained good gloss and still beaded water, the 3M was not among the top performers after three months. Too much work, not enough shine.

WEST MARINE ONE STEP

In a flip-top bottle very similar to those used by Star brite, West Marine's One Step Fiberglass Cleaner Wax was runnier than the other flip-top one-steps. Application was fairly easy, and the gloss stood out to one judge. But, after three months, gloss was unexceptional and water ran off the polished section in big drips.

Bottom Line: Another mediocre performer that isn't worth any pennies you might save.

STAR BRITE CLEANER WAX

Star brite's Heavy Duty One Step Cleaner Wax was one of the least expensive test products, and at three months, the section polished with it was looking very good. It picked up a lot of oxidation on our rag during application and provided one of the glossiest finishes.

Bottom Line: A good cleaner that was still beading water after three months, this is hands-down our Budget Buy.

Collinite 870
(Day 1)



Collinite 870
(at 3 months)



West Marine One Step
(at 3 months)



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Whether a wax can bead water after three months of weather exposure and regular washing is a good test of its protecting ability. PS's Best Choice, the Collinite 870, beaded water excellently both on Day 1 and at three months. At the other end of the spectrum, the West Marine One Step failed to bead water after three months. Instead, the water was shed in large drops.

MEGUIAR'S 67 ONE STEP

Labeled as an aggressive compound cleaner plus polish, Meguiar's 67 One Step Compound clearly seemed to lean toward the "cleaning" side of the cleaner/wax continuum. The thick liquid picked up stains and oxidation, but not as aggressively as we'd anticipated. Even on the heavily oxidized Javelin, it did not stand out in the field for its cleaning ability. At three months, it was clearly not beading water.

Bottom Line: A big step behind Meguiar's 50 liquid cleaner/wax.

MEGUIAR'S 50 CLEANER WAX

Meguiar's Mirror Glaze 50 paste wax was the second-best product in our wax test, so we had high hopes for this product. It touts anti-corrosive properties to fight rust, so we also put some on our test boat's rust-prone stainless steel folding ladder. In terms of consistency, this was the best of the products tested, not so runny as to be sloppy, not so thick as to dispense in gloppy burps.

Bottom Line: Excellent cleaner, and very good initial gloss that held up well at three months. It's a Recommended product.

RE-STRUCTURE POLISH

Introduced in 2005, Re-Structure's Professional Marine Polish is effectively a marine version of what is used to protect some new cars. The bottle guarantees a three-year finish, and according to the company, the finish is advertised for five years on cars. The product's penetrating and cleaning agent is MB-Silane, and its other ingredients seal the fiberglass to keep out dirt, grime, and UV damage.

Bottom Line: This is expensive stuff, but it works. It does not clean as well as some of the more abrasive products we tested, and its initial gloss was not quite as shiny as the Collinite. But at three months, this finish was beading water like it had just been applied. Recommended.



The Interlux Premium wax with cleaner we bought for this test came with a free sample packet of Interlux UV protectant and wax sealer, so we decided to test the Premium with and without the sealer. The difference is easy to see in these pictures: three-month results above; initial results at right. The Premium alone is not a top performer. The water-beading action and gloss achieved by using the sealer is a big improvement, however, applying the sealer essentially adds a step and defeats the purpose of a one-step cleaner.

SIMONIZ CLEANER AND WAX

The Simoniz Royale Boat Cleaner and Wax was the only paste wax/cleaner in our test, although 3M, Star brite, and Collinite make paste versions of their cleaner/waxes. (We'll report on these in a future update.) As the results of our previous wax test bore out, pastes trump liquids when it comes to durability, and they are also less messy to apply. This paste went a long way and did a good job cleaning rust and waterline stains.

Bottom Line: Simoniz delivered an easy-to-use paste that holds up over time. Given the results of our wax test, its performance was no surprise.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, we were surprised with our results after three months. We'd expected none of the products to still be beading water after continuous exposure to the Florida sun, when in fact, few of them weren't. Will the best gloss so far—Collinite 870—satisfy the person who is looking for a shine that turn heads? We think so.

Our Best Choice, Collinite 870 is the gloss champ at three months, though the dark horse and recommended polish, Re-Structure Marine Professional Marine Polish, is beading water as well

or better than the Collinite. We also recommend Star brite Heavy Duty Cleaner Wax, Meguiar's 50 Cleaner Wax, and Simoniz Royale Marine, which are all neck-and-neck at this point.

Except for Re-Structure, most manufacturers say six months of Florida sun is about the limit for these products. We'll see. ▲



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