



Brown Mahogany Stain with Stain Deck sample



Brown Mahogany Solar-Lux Stain and its Stain Deck sample



In Behlen colour

Michael Huntley dips into the catalogue and reviews coloured finishing products

American company Behlen have been manufacturing wood-finishing products since 1888 and supply a comprehensive range of stains, glazes, waxes, varnishes, polishes and accessories. In fact the range is so big that I will look only at colouring for now, leaving surface coatings to another issue.

Stain decks

Behlen's Stain Decks are wood samples that have been stained and printed on the

reverse with the name and number of the stain. Of course, stains take differently on different timbers but these serve as useful guides if you don't want to buy the whole range of stains in one go.

Mahogany Stains

The Brown Mahogany Wood Stain I chose is a semi-transparent pigment-based stain which was non-grain raising and 'fade resistant'.

It was easy to apply, dried quickly and didn't leave tide marks – often a problem with stains. The solvent was noticeable and you would only want to use this in a well-ventilated place; however you should always ensure adequate ventilation when polishing.

Solar-Lux Stain

I also tried the Medium Brown Mahogany Solar-Lux Stain. This is highly fade- and UV-resistant according to the label and is a dye-based stain as opposed to being pigment based. These bottles of stain come in a wide range of colours and can be mixed to achieve individual shades. I would suggest that experimentation is necessary but some interesting results can be obtained.

Aerosol stains

Two types of aerosol are also available, a wiping stain and a shading and glazing stain. These are available in a small range of common colours and can be used as enhancers or tints. Using Van Dyke Brown



Water-based grain filler is applied to open-grained oak...



... then rubbed across the grain with a cloth



Aerosol glazing stain warms up original colour



Aerosol wiping stain

shading on the upper part of the timber, photo top right, warmed up the colour.

Grain filler

I also looked at a water-based grain filler. I applied it to some open-grained oak with a foam pad, rubbed over it across the grain with a coarse cloth and set it aside to dry. I found this process to be much easier than many other grain fillers that I have used.

F&C assessment

I will report back on the longevity and durability of the test panels in due course but I can certainly recommend the Behlen range as a good introduction to the many facets of colouring and wood finishing. **F&C**



Finisher's colourwheel

Which colours to use in order to bring a timber to a match with adjacent surfaces is always a bit of a quandary, so Behlen sell a Finisher's Colourwheel which consists of two printed cards that can be rotated to indicate which colours to mix to produce a particular result. For those not familiar with mixing colours these would be a useful introduction to the subject. Later on you will want to make and record your own recipes. Creating test panels in different timbers with various base colours, glazes and top coats is tremendously useful.

Behlen system on DVD

Behlen's own DVD clearly identifies the various stages of either putting a finish onto new work or repairing an existing one, and as an introduction to the subject and to the product range it is excellent. As with all finishing products, unless you are really confident, it is best to stick to one manufacturer. The Behlen system certainly offers an integrated approach to polishing, but do be aware of Stateside jargon differences and, as always, test the products on an offcut and allow sufficient drying time.

The numbers

- Products and prices – all inc VAT
- Stain Deck samples, 15 Minute Wood Stain, B900-1005, £9.15
- Wood Stain, 15 Minute, B545-08326, £18.50 for 945ml
- Solar-Lux Stain, B503-3A135, £9.80 for 473ml
- Wiping Stain Aerosol, B115-0831, £7.80 for 369ml
- Shading & Glazing Stain Aerosol, B114-1478, £7.80 for 369ml
- DVD, Wood Finishing & Repair, B900-0040, £7.50

Behlen Products are available online
Web: www.behlen.co.uk