

# Caring for Teak

## About Teak

Teak is a dense, coarse, close-grained hardwood native to a large range of southeast Asia. No other wood compares to teak regarding its durability, elegance, stability and low maintenance; making it the top choice for shipbuilders and outdoor furniture makers alike. Teak wood contains high levels of resinous oils that make it naturally resistant to moisture, repellent to insects, and impervious to the drying effects of extreme weather including hot sun, rain, frost and snow. Teak also contains silica, which creates a density in the wood making it extremely resistant to water, rotting, warping, shrinking, swelling, mold and fungal decay and many harsh chemicals. Teak wood will not cause metals it comes in contact with to rust or corrode.

Teak wood will easily last a good 75 to 100 years virtually unaffected when left unprotected outdoors. Teak beams in good condition are commonly seen in buildings many centuries old, and have lasted in palaces and temples over 1,000 years. In fact, teak structures have been uncovered intact in the jungles of southeast Asia dating back 1,000 years. Teak is the only wood that can make these claims.

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One of the greatest features of quality teak wood is that it requires very little maintenance and ages gracefully. Over time, teak gradually changes color from the golden honey color to the silver-grey patina which distinguishes finely aged, outdoor teak. After a while this silver-grey patina progresses to a darker greenish-grey if left untreated. If you appreciate the natural color of aged teak, then all you really have to do is clean it regularly. A good rinse once or twice a month with a garden hose and wipe down with a towel is plenty in most cases. If you prefer the golden color of new teak, more regular cleanings will maintain much of the original hue. You can also treat teak wood with a teak protector or sealer. This will not affect the life of the wood, but it will preserve the golden honey tone that many people love. Oiling teak will also preserve teak's golden color, but starts a maintenance regimen that involves cleaning and re-oiling every 3 months to 1 year. Another option is to lightly sand the very outer surface of the wood. This will expose new wood that will have a golden tone. Regular cleanings are important to keep contaminants from accumulating on your cabinets which can create an environment for mold or fungus to grow on the surface of the wood. If you notice little dark spots on the wood's surface, clean them as soon as possible. In harsher environments, or when cleaning has been neglected, a light scrub with a teak cleaner or mild dish soap and clean water with a towel or soft, nylon bristle brush is all it takes. We do not recommend using a pressure washer to clean our teak cabinetry, but it can be done as long as you do so very carefully and are aware that too much pressure can damage the surface of the wood. Use only low pressure, a wide spray nozzle, and keep the tip at least 12" away from the teak.

## A Note About Color Staining:

Once you stain teak, you can't *un-stain* it. In other words, you cannot return to the natural golden brown or silver-grey color without numerous sandings. Stain is intended to be permanent. If you choose to stain teak after it has turned silver-grey, you should first sand it before applying stain.

## A Note About Oiling:

The natural oils that protect teak wood from weather, pests and rot is always inside the wood. Additional coats of oil added to the exterior won't soak in and penetrate the wood to protect it. In fact, commercial "teak oil" may actually deplete the oils that are there naturally. This is because "teak oil" includes solvents which can break down and damage the natural oils in teak wood. If you decide you want to oil your teak, 100% tung oil or linseed oil is a better choice. If you've applied oil to your teak and want to remove it, a good cleaning or two should do it.

