

By Capt. Louis Van Bergen

Spring Cleaning

Whether you own a 15-foot skiff or a 42 cruiser, you, or someone else if for some reason you don't take this endeavor on yourself, will be doing some spring cleaning before that first trip. This article will focus on the basic cleaning products and techniques necessary to get your boat shipshape.

Hull

The first part of every boat that people notice is the hull. This is also the part of your boat that takes the biggest beating all season long. Saltwater, tar, fish blood and the sun's rays bombard the hull.

To return the shine from the following spring, you will need to first wash the hull with boat soap and scrub brush. Any substances not removed by your scrubbing can be removed by a specialized hull cleaner, or a small amount of acetone.

After the scrubbing, you may notice some chalky deposits left behind. There are a few different options to rectify this condition. Companies like 3M, Meguiar's, Hot Rods and Collinite all make fiberglass cleaners of some type. Generally, they are mild abrasives designed to remove light oxidation that causes the chalky appearance. The product is rubbed onto the hull and wiped away, leaving a clean surface. If there are small scratches or signs of heavy oxidation, a more aggressive approach may be required using rubbing compounds that are covered in a different article this month.

Once you have the hull cleaned to perfection, a protective coating of wax is needed. If you walk into any marine supply store, you will find a multitude of products

available. There is spray on, liquid and paste waxes available from most manufacturers. I prefer a paste wax, as it seems to last from April till December.

Whichever type of wax you choose, the process is about the same. Spread an even coat of wax in circles on the hull and remove the residue, leaving a brilliant shine. Following the first coat of wax with another ensures complete coverage. Some boaters will finish up using an electric buffer to get the maximum shine from the wax but this is not always necessary.

Swab the Decks

Many boats today have a non-skid fiberglass deck. Dirt and grime seems to be attracted to the crevices in these decks. On today's market, there are many cleaners designed specifically to clean the crevices. I had always relied upon a stiff hand brush and sweat, but as I have gotten older, I have gotten wiser and switched to the cleaner that does the work for you. Protective products have also appeared in the last few years. Woody Wax makes a good product for this. It is sprayed onto the deck and then rinsed off 30 minutes later. I found it to work well at protecting the deck from blood and dirt for weeks at a time.

Down and Dirty

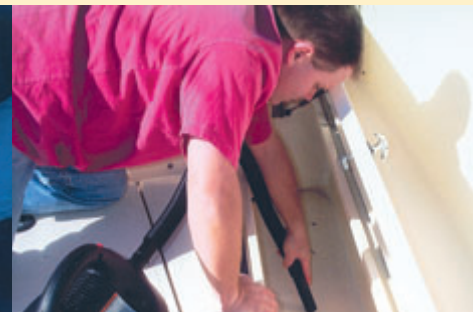
One of my least favorite tasks is cleaning the bilges, but it is a perfect opportunity. I start with a rag to clean up any crud on the surface. Since my boat has a four-stroke outboard, I do not have any oil in the bilge from spills or leaks. If you have inboard or oil tanks in the bilge, look carefully for oil residues. I use bleach and a



Revitalize your vinyl with a cleaning followed by a protectant.



Cleaning your enclosures requires some elbow grease, the right products and some space to spread out.



Getting down into every crevice is a good idea, as you probably won't think to do it during the season.

specialty bilge cleaner since my bilge gets a little fishy over the season. Remember to collect any oil residue and dispose of it properly. Each fish box and storage compartment gets a thorough cleaning with bleach and soap. I will also take the time to vacuum any leftover water or debris which does not go down the drain. If your boat contains living quarters, you will need to do a complete cleaning from top to bottom. Watch for mold due to being closed up for a few months. Bleach can be your best bet in these situations. I also raid my household cleaning supplies for foaming cleaners and disinfectants. Armada's MightyBrite also works wonders in these areas, particularly when any mildew or fungus have become a problem.

Metal Health

Many of our boats today have metal T-tops, hard tops and some, a metal tower. There are some specialty cleaners that help remove corrosion and salt deposits. Use the right product and some elbow grease, and you will have that metal gleaming.

Most metal products fall into two categories, paste and spray. Pastes are rubbed onto the metal removing deposits and leaving a clean surface ready for wax. The latest product on my cleaning shelf is Woody Wax. I am extremely impressed with the results and how easy it is to use. The product is sprayed onto the metal (or a clean rag is used to coat the metal) and it is then left to work without the rubbing. In 30 minutes, come back and just wipe off any excess.

Seeing Clear

The optical quality of a window, windshield or enclosure is not only for esthetics, but safety as well. Glass cleaner is fine for true glass but not for plexiglass windshields or Insinglass curtains. Products like Plexus Plastic Polish and Meguiar's Mirror Glaze Plastic Cleaner and Polish work wonders at cleaning and polishing an enclosure.

Vinyl and Canvas Care

The vinyl on my boat tends to get stained each season. There are specialty products for those of you with high end and colored vinyl. I have found a little bleach goes a

ARMADA'S MightyBrite STAIN REMOVER

Do you have mildew, mold or fungus in your boat and can't get rid of it? Try using Armada's MightyBrite, developed to remove all of these problems and dirt while brightening the soiled materials. According to the manufacturer, the product is perfect for vinyl, cloth, sunbrella and canvas materials. It is also non-toxic and bio-degradable, and safe on all colors. They also say that it will not cause damage from over-use. MightyBrite is available at marine supply stores, or visit Armada online at www.armadacoatings.com.



long

way on my boat. If the stain does not come out with bleach, I will use a light abrasive cleaner like Soft Scrub. I would not recommend using it on dark colored vinyl. You can also try using Armada's MightyBrite on these surfaces, as they should help to brighten up any vinyl and canvas.

Canvas or Sunbrella care is a two-step process. I periodically clean any bird droppings and salt deposits from the canvas once a week, but still end up cleaning it with a specialty cleaner made specifically for these fabrics. After cleaning the fabric, a treatment with a water repellent will help prolong the life of your canvas and reduce leaks in enclosures.

If you are working in a marina, be sure to follow all their rules. Organize all your materials in 5-gallon buckets and milk crates so you will not forget the one cleaner you really need. As well, bring along a garbage bag to collect all your trash and used rags for the wash.

Clean It Up!

Spring is a wonderful time of the year. As the days get longer and warmer, remember to start to gather materials for your spring cleanup.

Also e-mail or call all those friends that come fishing throughout the year. There is plenty of work to go around, and when you refuse their money after fishing trips, you can feel better about it too. The boating season is long, so take that extra day or two to do the job correctly, and in the fall, your fruits of labor will still be admired.



Spend some quality time cleaning the bilge before going back into the water.



Start off the spring cleaning process with a scrubbing from top to bottom.



Woody Wax provides great results on metals and is easy to spray on, wait and wipe clean.