

USING WOOD IN HOMES AND GARDENS : 3 - USING WOOD PRESERVATIVE PRODUCTS

There are situations where it is not possible to use timber that has been pre-treated and you need to use wood preservative products yourself. These include treating wood that is being attacked by fungi and insects using remedial or curative products specifically designed for this purpose; or you may wish to apply a wood preservative to an item you have made from untreated timber. A range of preventive products is available for this purpose. Products are formulated for use indoors only or outdoors only; some can be used in both situations.

PRESERVATION AND DECORATION

When selecting a product, especially one that is coloured, you should carefully read the product description. Some products are designed to be decorative in function by giving colour to the wood surface. They may also prevent the wood from expanding and contracting, so reducing splitting and cracking. Such products may include substances designed to prevent mould or stain fungi growing on the surface of the wood – these are authorised as *wood treatments* but are usually ineffective against decay fungi (see next section for explanation of authorised products). Only products with wood preservation properties are designed to act as wood preservatives and give the timber an extended life against biological degradation.

AUTHORISED PRODUCTS

Products containing substances to control biological growth or attack must be authorised before they can legally be placed on the market or used.

An authorised product is labelled *wood preservative or wood treatment* (see above) and will have an *HSE Number*.

Such products have been cleared for use under current UK legislation, and their correct use will not harm people, non-target species, or the environment. All approved products are subject to review by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), and an approval for a product can be amended or withdrawn if it is considered necessary.

ALWAYS READ THE LABEL.

All wood preservative products are required to be labelled and it is important to read and understand the label before you buy the product. The instructions on the label **must** be followed so the product is used safely and effectively.

The label also tells you the following information:

- What the product is approved for, e.g. 'For use only as a wood preservative'. The product must not be used for any other purpose.
- Instructions on who is allowed to use the product.
 - An *amateur* (DIY) user- the product is available to the general public.
 - A *professional* user - the product can only be used by people who have to use wood preservatives as part of their normal work and who have received appropriate training to enable them to use the products safely.
 - An *industrial* user - the product can only be used in an industrial timber treatment plant.
- Whether any protective clothing or equipment needs to be worn when using the product.
- How to use the product without harming yourself, other people or animals.
- Whether access to treated areas needs to be restricted.
- How to use the product without harm to the environment and wildlife, e.g. fish, bats, bees and plants.
- How to apply the product effectively.

REMEDIAL (CURATIVE) TREATMENT

Before considering whether to use a curative wood preservative approved for amateur (DIY) use, it is good practice to assess how much wood there is to treat, if it can be accessed safely, the type of protective clothing needed and whether the job is within your capabilities. If you are unsure about any of these points it is best to employ a specialist contractor who will

be able to identify the extent and type of infestation and recommend the appropriate treatment.

If you believe that the timber is being affected by dry rot then you are best advised to contact a specialist company that is skilled in the diagnosis and treatment of dry rot. The BWPDA can provide the names of specialist companies. Remember it is not just the wood that is infected; the wall and masonry surfaces will also require treatment in order to eradicate the fungus.

If you decide the job is within your capabilities, select a product that claims the appropriate properties, e.g. if insect attack needs to be controlled choose a product that contains an insecticide. If the damage is such that you are unsure whether the timber retains sufficient strength, a better option may be to replace it with pre-treated timber.

FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS SHOWN ON THE CONTAINER

In particular pay attention to the following points:

- Isolate electrical appliances.
- If a product containing solvent is to be used, ventilate the area well, and take fire precautions.
- Keep people away from the areas being treated, especially pets, animals and children for the required time after treatment.
- Protect plants.
- Do not allow the product to enter drains, watercourses or ponds.

METHODS OF APPLICATION

In the home and garden the only methods of applying wood preservatives that are available are brushing, spraying and injection.

Brushing: apply the preservative liberally especially at the ends and at joints. Do not over-apply so the product runs off the wood and is lost to the ground and the environment. The application rate is likely to be around 1 litre to a wood surface area of 4 m². Some products can be applied by roller; however again take care not to over-apply the product.

Spraying: check that the product you intend to use can be applied by spraying and note the particular spraying conditions described on the product label. In general it must be carried out at a low pressure (1-3 bar) to prevent aerosols

being generated, or the product bouncing off the wood surface. It may be necessary to apply several coats of the product in order to obtain the manufacturer's recommended usage rate.

Injection: this method is typically used to apply insecticidal formulations into the beetle flight holes in furniture. The products are usually supplied with an applicator.

There are also products supplied in the form of small rods or pellets and these are inserted into holes drilled into the wood. The holes are then plugged.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

It is good practice to use gloves and eye protection with all methods of application. When spraying a product an ori-nasal mask should also be used. These can usually be purchased from outlets supplying wood preservative products.

You are also recommended to wear separate workwear such as boiler suits or disposable coveralls. These should be kept separate from everyday wear, and protective clothing should be washed separately from everyday clothing.

CLEANING OF EQUIPMENT

When cleaning brushes and other equipment, washings should not be disposed of into drains or watercourses. Check the product label and other sources of information supplied with the product for advice on how to clean equipment and dispose of the residues.

SAFE STORAGE

Containers with wood preservatives in them should be stored securely in the original container and out of reach of children.

DISPOSAL OF EMPTY CONTAINERS

Wastes arising from products used in the home and garden are categorised as household waste and it is recommended that, where possible, such containers are taken to civic amenity sites and directions sought as to where the container should be disposed on the site.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- *GENERAL*
- The Wood Protection Association (a division of The British Wood Preserving and Damp-proofing Association)
www.wood-protection.org
- Wood. for good www.woodforgood.org

- *PRESERVATIVES*
- Suppliers of wood preservative products. Details can be found on the WPA and Wood For Good websites.

- *TREATED TIMBER*
- Suppliers of treated timber and products made from treated timber.
- Wood Protection Association
www.wood-protection.org
- UK Forest Products Association,
www.ukfpa.co.uk
- Timber Trades Federation
www.ttf.co.uk
- Timber Decking Association,
www.tda.org.uk

- *REGULATORY BODIES*
- Health and Safety Executive,
www.hse.gov.uk/hthdir/noframes/bpau.htm
- Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs,
www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/index.htm
- Environment Agency, www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/waste
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency,
www.sepa.org.uk/guidance/index.htm

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