

Some of the exclusive paint and stain finishes from General Finishes



PRICE: from £8.90

Gel Stain: £8.90 per 473ml tin
 Arm-R-Seal: £9.80 per 473ml tin
 High Performance
 Top Coat: £28.80 per 946ml tin

PROS

- High quality and big range

CONS

- Not yet available in the shops

FURTHER INFO

General Finishes (UK)
 ☎ 0115 973 7287
 🌐 www.generalfinishes.co.uk

GENERAL FINISHES' WOOD FINISHES

American gloss!

General Finishes is a new brand to the UK, but a long established supplier Stateside, with its roots going back to 1928. The company is now marketing its range of water-based and oil-based products in the UK. Although currently only available over the internet, the finishes should be available in retail outlets from early next year. The website has loads of information and sample finishes. I tried out three products from across the range: Arm-R-Seal Oil-Urethane wipe on finish, the oil based Gel Stain and the Water Based High Performance Top Coat. The Arm-R-Seal Oil and Urethane finish is a pale golden wipe-on oil that penetrates and gives a warm natural effect. It's easy to apply. Simply wipe on and after a few minutes, wipe off any excess. Applied to white ash, it warmed up the colour slightly. Three coats are recommended, with around 6-8 hours between coats. It comes in Satin, Semi-Gloss and Gloss.

Gel Stains are common in the States, but I think this is probably the first available in the UK. It's exactly what it says, a thick gel that you wipe on to the bare timber. Once liberally applied and rubbed in, you wipe off the excess, rubbing with the grain. The gel is urethane-based for a hard finish. You can add further coats if you want a deeper colour. I applied it to the same ash board and was very impressed by the ease of applications, the evenness of the staining and the deep colour with only



one coat. Staining on ash accentuates the rich grain pattern and this shows very well in my sample. The stain comes in 11 different colours. My sample was Nutmeg, just above the middle of the range in terms of darkness. It dries in 6-8 hours, though if you're applying an extra topcoat you should wait longer, up to 48 hours for a water-based top coat.

I tried General Finishes' High Performance Top Coat. This is a water-based product, so has reduced environmental downsides – especially no strong solvent smells. Although the liquid in the tin is a thin milky colour, it's completely clear when applied and doesn't show any of the bluish tint that water-based finishes used to leave. If you wanted to retain the pale colour of ash or other light woods, this would be an excellent choice. In a recent multi-product test in the USA, High Performance Top Coat was rated the best overall out of a field of 13 water-based finishes. Recommended.

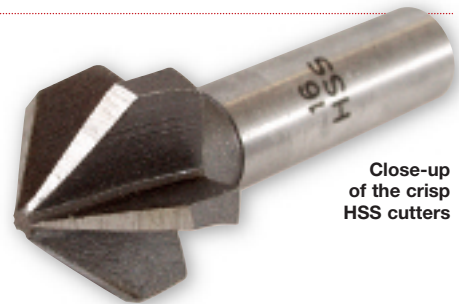


DRAPER EXPERT 16MM ROSEHEAD COUNTERSINK

Sinking feeling

Countersinks come in a range of styles and sizes. This is the bigger of the two in Draper's "Expert" range. The smaller one is 13mm diameter. The sinks

cut triangular recesses at 90 degrees, to match standard screw heads. Machined out of high speed steel, this sink has five cutting blades for smooth operation. It worked well even in hard beech and only takes a second in softer pine.



Close-up of the crisp HSS cutters

PRICE: £9.11

PROS

- Smooth cutting and controlled

CONS

- Bit more work than a drill accessory

FURTHER INFO

Draper Tools
 ☎ 02380 494333
 🌐 www.draper.co.uk