

BOATWORKS

EQUIPMENT, MAINTENANCE & KNOW-HOW

Gear test: Boat Brite teak cleaner

By Frank Kehr

TECHNICAL WRITER

Most of us aren't thinking of teak cleaners at this time of year, but there is a good reason for doing just that. Natural teak requires year-round care and maintenance if you want it to look good. And cleaning it prior to off-season storage not only makes spring commissioning quicker, it helps keep your covered boat clean by destroying the mold and mildew that can live in the wood.

I enjoy the look and practicality of letting my teak decks turn naturally gray during the season, but they still need periodic cleaning, as the pollutants and grime that cover the gelcoat and canvas also are buried in the grain of the teak, and can wash out and streak the boat. Simple washing with

boat soap won't do the trick. Many teak cleaners I've used do a reasonable job but can be harsh to surrounding areas of the boat, are messy, and aren't environmentally friendly.

The Brite Group LLC of Rochester, N.Y., manufactures Captain John's Boat Brite teak cleaner, which is effective, a pleasure to use and meets the Environmental Protection Agency's National Clean Marina Guidelines. The cleaner comes in a 12-ounce tub and has a paste-like consistency. Although the formula is proprietary, the main ingredients are sodium cocoate, which is derived from the coco tree, and emulsifiers. The material safety data sheet I requested confirms the company's claims of producing an environmentally clean product, but how well does it work?

To test the teak cleaner I decided to work on the teak and bronze rubrails on my Albin 36 trawler. The wood had been neglected for several years, mainly due to the fact that when rinsing off any teak cleaner I've used the hull sides below the rails show signs of wax removal. Following the instructions, I wet the area to be cleaned and lightly brushed the cleaner onto the teak. The area I was working with made a toothbrush the best tool for the job. As I worked the cleaner into the surface of the teak, I could easily see the ac-



The cleaner restored the teak to a natural blond color.

tion beginning. I let the cleaner sit for several minutes, did a small amount of scrubbing, and hosed the teak off. The photo at right shows just how well the teak cleaner works with very little effort. I was impressed with the amount of dirt released from the teak, with no signs of wax removal from the hull sides. It was also comforting to know that, according to the manufacturer, the cleaner is 100 percent non-toxic, phosphate-free and biodegradable.

Captain John's Boat Brite teak cleaner

does a good job of restoring teak to a natural blond color with little fuss, and it's harmless to the environment we all play in. With a suggested retail price of \$13.99, it is, in my opinion, a bargain and a nice addition to your boat's cleaning bucket. It is available from West Marine, BoatU.S. and other leading marine retailers. Additional product information and a listing of retailers by state is available at www.captainjohnsboatbrite.com, or contact the company at (585) 943-6111. ■