



# The Good Wood

monthly news & specials  
from Kaltimber

## *Finish Your Wood with Flair and Care!!*

*Finishing wood in an appropriate way is exceedingly important if you want to get the best out of your wood. In this two-part series, we survey different types of wood finishes and look at what is right for you.*

I have touched on this topic before, but really it deserves a book’s worth of attention. Little information is available to Indonesian consumers about wood finishes, and what is out there is by no means comprehensive, nor particularly accessible. For those of you with experience in this area, you may have noted there are limited choices on the local market. Your average local builder will tend to offer the standard polyurethane-based finished that they know, interchangeably called “plitur” or “Mowilex”, a brand-name. Sometimes a substance traditionally made from beetles wings called “sirlac”(Shellac) is used for finishing teak. Another product we can pick up in large Indonesian supermarkets is what I like to call ‘fake’ teak oil. The smell is enough to knock you out. My guess is the ratio of teak oil to petroleum distillates is quite marked in this product.

There are a number of options available for timber finishes. Let’s look at some pros and cons of the various types.

Type of Finish	Description	Pros	Cons
<b>Solvent Based</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Polyurethane Coatings</li> </ul>	Modern varnishes and polyurethanes are generally petro chemical-based which are thinned with petroleum distillates to enable easy application Some varnishes are made by heating oils and synthetic resins, then thinned with hydrocarbon solvents	Glossy finish Easy to apply	Potential health risks as contain a high level of solvents/ chemicals Can crack and darken over time Provides surface coating only, similar to a plastic film Flammable
<b>Oil Based</b>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unblended Wood Oils</li> </ul> <p>Common wood oils: Tung Linseed Soy Castor</p>	<p>Oils that are extracted from plants or nuts. Can be 100% pure or blended with other oils</p>	<p>Permeates timber cells and simultaneously seals and protects Not effected by moisture content fluctuation of wood (elastic) Many wood oils are plant-based and hence environmentally more sound</p>	<p>Must re-apply once the oil breaks down Susceptible to UV rays Some exterior wood oils are susceptible to black mold Some are flammable</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Polymerised Wood Oils</li> </ul>	<p>Specially processed oils that have been heated to cause ‘thermal polymerisation’</p>	<p>Dry faster Harder surface film More durable glossy lustre</p>	<p>More expensive than unblended oils</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pigment Oil Based Stains</li> </ul>		<p>Pigment gives longer protection to timber from harmful UV rays</p>	<p>Stain will darken the timber colour Some are flammable</p>
<b>Water Based</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pigmented Paint</li> </ul>	<p>Many types of paints on the market, some better than others. Traditional finishes such as lime wash are pigment-based</p>	<p>Will protect wood indefinitely</p>	<p>Paint will cover the wood so characteristics are not displayed Some paints in Indonesia contain lead</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water Based Coatings &amp; sealants (petrochemical-derived)</li> </ul>	<p>Developed in a move away from traditional solvent finishes, are supposed contain less VOCs (volatile organic compounds) than solvent-based products</p>		

The type of coating that you use should be determined by timber type, use, desired gloss level and appearance and your own personal preferences. Stay tuned for the next issue, where I will review wood finishing products available on the market.

Till next time!