

## **CARING AND CLEANING OF LEATHER FURNITURE (12)**

**This article was prompted because of a call I received from a friend concerning staining on leather furniture. This couch and chair that I examined showed a white stain on the end of the seat area. The white stain was actually color loss caused by chloride salts. Chloride salts are found in perspiration, sun tan lotion, food and beverage. Chloride salts can be very damaging to leather. Color loss on leather is also caused by friction and abrasion which causes the surface color to crock off.**

### **CORRECTION PROCEDURE**

**When I asked my friend for a nut she looked at me in puzzlement. I split the nut in half and rubbed the discolored area. This restored the color by putting some oil in to the leather which enhanced the existing color.**

### **FACTS ABOUT LEATHER**

**Grain leather is the smooth side of the leather which differs from the buff or nap side which is referred to as suede. Finished skins have a surface color on the leather. Unfinished or naked skins are tan so the dye is absorbed into the skin. Naked skins do not have a surface finish. The dyes used in the tanning process on leather are highly sensitive to light. The colors will oxidize and fade when exposed to sunlight from windows. Some blue colors will oxidize and can turn red or purple. During periods of the day when exposure from sunlight is greatest it is best to close curtains or shades. Do not sit on leather furniture if you are perspiring or have on any body lotions that will come into contact with the leather.**

### **CLEANING LEATHER FURNITURE**

#### **Preparation:**

- (1) Water**
- (2) Clean Cloth**
- (3) A mild detergent**
- (4) Castor Oil (found in the pharmacy department of supermarkets)**

**You can wipe down most leather furniture with water mixed with a little mild detergent. After wiping down with this mixture use just plain water to rinse away any soap residue. Then put a little castor oil on a cloth and wipe down the cleaned areas while it is still damp. Castor oil is used to give the leather softness and depth of color. Do not use mineral oil which tends to dry out the leather. Although the cleaning technique is usually safe it is wise to test an unexposed area of the leather for cleaning safety. If excess dye transfers to cloth stop the cleaning process. Do not use this procedure on suede which has a napped surface.**

(2)

## **DYE TOUCH-UP**

**There are times that you may need a little dye put into the leather. This can cover color loss, staining and other defects.**

- (1) Shoe polish-Brown or black shoe polish can often be used on leather. For example black shoe polish can cover a paint stain. You can use a q-tip for application of the polish on small areas.**
- (2) Carbon paper-Apply blue or black carbon paper to a cloth and then rub on discolored areas.**

**Note: All color applications should be tested on an unexposed area for effectiveness.**

## **RE-FINISHING**

**If you have discolored leather furniture you may want to look into having the entire leather refinished by a leather cleaning expert. For example a discolored and naked skin can be refinished with a surface dye to cover discolorations. Although this may change the original look and feel of the leather it will still be in a usable condition.**