

Something to Dye For

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I have a small selection of penetrating stains in my workshop and an even smaller collection of gel stains; I also have two or three powdered dyes I've experimented with. Each of these containers of stain is likely to hit the expiration date long before I use up all the contents. The problem is these tinting or grain enhancement solutions are usually not exactly the color I wanted, or they looked good on maple but not the oak I am currently using. Check out any woodworking supplies catalog or visit your favorite store and the number of stain-dye finishing options is overwhelming. Unfortunately, at \$12-\$24 or more a pop, it's too expensive to try them all out. The situation is a contrast to what you find at any good paint store, whether it be Sherwin Williams, Benjamin More, HD, or Lowes. These vendors will all sell you a sample can of paint for around \$6. It seems to be there is a business opportunity here for a woodworking stain or dye vendor.

This thought came back to me in December when I attended the Saturday morning event at Woodcraft Walpole. I noticed that Woodcraft sells 20 different Transfast dye colors (list price \$12.50 each for one ounce of powder). As I later wrote on the Buy and Sell Forum, I was thinking that if three EMGW members were interested in having a small sample of each of the colors, then I would purchase one bottle of each color, a bunch of test tubes, paper funnels, and test tube labels and split each dye color into fourths (1/4). Total cost of the project would be approximately \$280 or \$70 per person. With such a sample collection in your workshop, a woodworker could test to see which dye color best met his needs, and then either use the remaining powder from the sample or buy a full bottle of the product with the confidence that he is buying the right one. So far, no EMGW member has taken me up on my "sharing economy" proposition.

This brings me to a similar thought. Someone I know in Denver belongs to a woodworking club of some sort. There is a membership fee, but members gain access to a "library" of tools they can borrow. This seems to make eminent sense to me since so many tools these days are expensive but not used frequently. For example, I don't build a lot of drawers, so the economics of a nice dovetail jig are not very attractive. And while my table saw is much more expensive, I use it nearly every day (it's also too heavy to be portable). The library concept works well for what I call usufructs: things that can be used without being used up; a table saw is a usufruct while a table saw blade is not. I guess the tool rental department at HD and Lowes addresses a similar need, but is aimed at contractors and not woodworkers

Let me know your thoughts (awdbrookline@gmail.com).