

# GULF ARMOR DOORS

## FINISHING & MAINTENANCE INSTRUCTIONS

**FINISHING INSTRUCTIONS:** Gulf Armor Doors by Fulcrum Building Group, LLC have been handcrafted from some of the finest hardwoods available. The wood has been kiln-dried for increased stability. It is important that your door be stained and finished as described below within five (5) days of delivery and before the door is subjected to the elements in an exterior application. Doors not prepared, finished/sealed, and maintained in accordance with these Finishing & Maintenance Instructions will not be covered by warranty.

**INSPECTION:** You must inspect the door(s) immediately upon receipt, before finishing or installation. If a factory defect or deficiency exists, you must promptly notify us in writing in accordance with our Sales Terms.

**WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:** It is important that you have the right expectations about the finish on your door. The following notes are to help you understand and make decisions about the finishing process:

1. No finish available today will provide 100% long term protection for your door. Finishes on metal doors, vinyl doors or wood doors will fade and deteriorate over time. When the finish on these doors breaks down, not only will they look bad but the door can be damaged if not painted or refinished. The difference in these doors and a stained and finished hardwood door is that when moisture penetrates the finish of a wood door and is neglected for a period of time, the wood begins to discolor or turn gray. Proper maintenance will prevent this and refinishing will rejuvenate your door.

2. Door Enemy #1 is the sun. When a door is finished, the finish has elasticity which allows it to stretch and contract with your door. Over time finishes lose this elasticity. Direct long-term exposure to the hot sun will speed up this process; this is one of the reasons no one can tell you how often your door will need refinishing. When the finish hardens, it no longer will stretch with the wood but will open hairline cracks in the finish. On stile and rail doors these

usually first occur where two pieces of wood come together. Now water gets into the act. The protective seal is broken and moisture can begin to penetrate. When this occurs, you may first see these cracks as yellowish lines. This is a sign that maintenance is needed soon. (See Suggested Door Maintenance)

3. Something to remember is that wood comes from a living breathing tree and is more sensitive to the elements than metal, but is far more beautiful. The reason most people select a wood door is for the warm natural look that it gives their home. The wood used in Gulf Armor Doors is selected for the best match in grain and color, but since wood is a natural product, these characteristics may vary in every inch of every board. That is part of its beauty. It is important to realize that many woods change color when exposed to air and light. Mahogany, for instance, may darken; this means that two boards that start off the same may darken differently. It is recommended that hardwood doors be stained prior to applying finish. The stain tones the wood to go with its surroundings and helps even out color variations that may occur over time.

**PREPARATION:** Gulf Armor doors have been factory sanded before shipping. However, the wood fibers on the surface of an unfinished door will “raise” until sealed due to changes in temperature and humidity. The nail holes have been left unfilled so they can be filled with putty the same color as the stain you plan to use on your door. We will often mix a little stain with the putty to get the right color. All wood surfaces will need additional sanding to prepare for finishing. Weatherstripping must be removed from the jamb and astragal before sanding. Most finish manufacturers recommend that you first sand with 150 grit sandpaper after filling all nail holes and stepping up to 180 grit for the final sanding. Proper sanding of all wood components is important to remove surface blemishes, handling marks, cross grain scratches, surface contaminants, etc., and to achieve the most consistent color from your stain. Sanding should always be done with the direction of the grain. Door units should be sealed within 72 hours of sanding.

**FINISHING/SEALING:** The following guidelines must be followed:

1. Prior to sealing, the door and jamb should not be subjected to excessive humidity, moisture, heat, dryness, direct sunlight, or significant atmospheric changes.

2. The entire door unit, including all six (6) edges of the door slab, cutouts for hardware, mortises for hinges, and the jamb and astragal, must be thoroughly sealed to provide maximum protection from the elements. Weatherstripping must be removed from the jamb and astragal before staining and sealing. If the door is pre-hung, the hinges should be removed prior to staining and sealing.
3. We recommend an oil-based stain in the event that a tint other than the natural color of the wood is desired. We recommend use of a high-quality sealant with UV-resistant additives, such as a UVA Spar Varnish (marine-type varnish). Stain and sealant must be applied in accordance with the stain and/or sealant manufacturer's instructions. Sealant manufacturers typically require a minimum of three (3) coats of sealant.
4. Follow the sealant manufacturer's application instructions and be sure to allow sufficient time for curing between coats.
5. If the door is to be painted rather than clear coat finished or stained and finished, follow the preparation/sanding instructions set forth above, and apply a high-quality oil base primer to the entire door unit, including all six (6) edges of the door slab, cutouts for hardware, mortises for hinges, and the jamb and astragal. We recommend use of a high-quality exterior grade paint, which must be applied in accordance with the manufacturer's directions. Typically, this means at least three (3) coats of a high-quality exterior grade paint.

**DOOR MAINTENANCE:** A properly finished hardwood door is truly a thing of beauty. All doors, be they metal, vinyl or wood, require maintenance to keep them looking good. Understanding the proper on-going maintenance of your wood door will ensure that it remains a thing of beauty. While annual maintenance is recommended, more frequent maintenance may be required for your hardwood door depending on the amount of its exposure to the sun, wind and rain, and the condition of the protective finish. The greater the exposure to the sun, the greater the probability of oxidation and breakdown of the protective finish. The maintenance requirements for your wood door are entirely dependent on variables unique to each installation. Below is our guide for preserving the beauty of your hardwood door. Probably the most important step and the most neglected step in preserving the beauty of a hardwood door is "inspecting the door". If you do not go in and out the front door on a regular basis, you may not notice the gradual changes that may occur in the door, unless you make

it a point to inspect the door periodically. Below are some things you should look for when inspecting the door:

1. Graying of the door or gray splotches often causing the door to feel rough or look dirty. This is usually a sign of mildew and is most common in a humid warm climate usually in a yard with a number of pine or other trees. This problem is easily remedied by cleaning the door with a mild solution of Clorox and water. After removing the mildew, it is a good idea to clean and rinse as described below.

2. The door has become dusty, dull or just plain dirty looking. This usually occurs on doors that are well protected from the wind and rain. This calls for a little soap and water. We recommend mixing 1/4 cup mild detergent like liquid Tide with a gallon of water and scrubbing the door lightly once or twice using a soft cloth. Be sure to rinse all the soap off the door after cleaning. We do NOT recommend using wax or furniture polish of any kind on your door. Some of these products can get into the finish and create problems with the bonding of new finish when your door requires refinishing.

3. There are places on the door that are beginning to yellow. This is typically a sign of moisture beginning to get behind the finish. It usually is a sign that the finish has lost its elasticity and started cracking with the expansion and contraction of the wood. This is normal when the finish hardens and is directly related to the door's exposure to sun and rain. This problem can easily be remedied by first sanding the door lightly with 220 grit sandpaper to help clean the surface and rough it up enough for a new coat of finish to stick and applying one or two more coats of sealant. This is an easy 30 to 45 minute "Do It Yourself" project or any painter can do it. If this problem is neglected it will get worse and become more difficult to resolve.

4. The wood in the door is graying or yellowing in large spots usually worse at the bottom of the door. The finish may also be beginning to lift up in places. This is what happens if you do not inspect your door or neglect to handle #3 above in a timely fashion. This problem is more difficult to remedy:

A. Best Case – Aggressively sand the bad places using 180 grit sandpaper followed with 220 grit. You may need to go back to the raw wood in some places. Be sure to sand with the grain. Apply stain to the sanded areas and try to "shade" to match the color of the original

finish. Usually, the grain on these spots is very open and will soak up stain quickly and can become too dark if you are not careful. You can dilute the stain with mineral spirits to help prevent this. You may have to experiment with sanding and staining these spots to get your color right. After your stain has dried for 24 hours, apply sealant in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

B. Worst Case – It's time to strip the door. This is only caused by neglect and we'd recommend having a professional do it for you. In most areas, there are professionals that specialize in refinishing furniture and doors. We do not recommend "dipping" a door as leaving the door in the vat too long or using too strong a stripper can dissolve some of the glues used in your door. If you decide to do it yourself consult your local paint store for a recommended stripper and follow the manufacturer's instructions. After stripping the door leave it out in the sun for a couple of days so that it dries well, and you give time for the evaporation of chemicals left in the wood from the stripper. Once the door is good and dry, stain and finish as described above.