

# BLACK AND BLUE SPOTS

*by Bruce Fairchild.*

I recently had a piece of marquetry come out of the press with black spot, mostly on the lighter coloured veneers. These spots could not scrap or sand off. I tried wood bleach on the spots, from my experience don't (it changed the veneer colouring by bleaching the colour out of the veneer, in the area I applied it). Since the piece of marquetry was now ruined, I used some muriatic acid on the spots. It removed the spots but destroyed the piece of marquetry. The acid give veneers a purplish shade and the veneer cracked. I should let you know this piece of marquetry was pressed with a sheet of rubber about twice the thickness of an inner tube, which I thought would be good means of applying equal pressure on the difference in veneer thickness.

Now what happened to cause these spots! The prime cause of spotting is caused by allowing the veneers in the press to become damp. Water based adhesives like PVA glue rely upon evaporation of the moisture in the glue. The rubber sheet I used or any other impervious membrane prevents this and traps excess water in the veneers. From this it can be seen that it is best to use absorbent materials when pressing a piece of marquetry.

From the *Marquetry Manual* by William Lincoln, page 49, "Should the black spot problem be encountered, they can be removed by touching the affected places with weak sulphuric acid (from a car battery for example)". Please read the last paragraph for my feelings on this answer.

Now for blue spot, which I have never encountered. When I was discussing the black spot problem with John Sedgwick he stated he had encountered blue spots. They are caused by chemical reaction between iron and tannin in the wood. The spots are the result of tiny metal fragments picked up from the veneer mill knife, in cutting or from scraper when finishing your marquetry piece. Mineral stains can be encountered naturally in wood or produced when making a harewood.

Recently I tried a weak sulphuric acid solution (from a car battery) on a piece of harewood, it removed the stain from the veneer. At the time I thought I had the answer, but was surprised that the area later turned purple colour where the acid had been applied. I tried acid on other pieces of veneer and got similar results. From my experience I would not try to remove stains but try my best to avoid producing stains.

Paul Armstrong has used oxalic acid on a piece of John Sedgwick's marquetry that had blue spots. This solution was painted on and allowed to dry. The blue spots were removed, but the green poplar in the piece had turned brown. After sanding the green returned to the poplar, it was only a surface reaction.