



Carnauba Car Wax vs. Paint Sealants

You have two basic choices when it comes to paint protection: carnauba wax or synthetic paint sealant. Here you'll find information on each so you can choose the paint protection that's right for you.

Carnauba Waxes

Carnauba wax is the preferred car wax of collectors and concours enthusiasts because it creates a rich, warm glow. It doesn't appear to sit on the paint. It transforms the paint into a deep, liquid pool that shimmers under changing light conditions. The more carnauba wax, the more shine.

The wax is produced by the Brazilian Tree of Life, a palm tree, in order to coat its leaves. The wax provides protection from the sweltering sun and it sheds water so it falls onto the ground and is absorbed by the tree's roots. If you think back to junior high science class, you might remember that plants release oxygen through their leaves. For this reason, carnauba wax is breathable. Good for the tree and good for your paint.

Carnauba is rock hard in its natural form. When the leaves of the Tree of Life are harvested, the wax flakes off as the leaves dry out, or they are put into a machine that removes the wax. It comes off in hard flakes. Car Wax makers have to blend the wax with oils, petroleum distillates, or a solvent called naphtha (commonly used to thin wood varnishes and paints) in order to make the wax workable. The very best carnauba-based car wax is only about 1/3 natural carnauba. It's probably for the best since the price gets higher and higher as the concentration of carnauba rises. When a product advertises "pure carnauba car wax" or "100% carnauba car wax", they are referring to the purity of the carnauba that is in the product, not the product as a whole.

That brings us to grading. Carnauba is harvested and then graded according to color, purity, and where it was grown. Trees grown in the northern area of Brazil produce the highest grade carnauba. The yellow wax is the most pure and therefore receives the highest grade. This is the grade most commonly used in high end car waxes and in the pharmaceutical industry as a pill coating.

As you've already read, carnauba protects the leaves of a palm tree from the intense heat and humidity experienced in Brazil. The carnauba car wax repels water and, consequently, most contaminants. When applied to any surface, carnauba retains these characteristics. Therefore, an application of a carnauba-based car wax to your vehicle

will protect it from UV rays, heat, moisture, oxidation, and environmental contamination. And it looks like a million bucks!

The drawback of carnauba waxes, if you can call it a drawback, is that it does not last as long as a synthetic sealant. A carnauba car wax finish will wear off in approximately 6 to 8 weeks. It depends heavily on the climate in which you live and whether or not your vehicle is garaged. Daily commutes in a hot, humid climate mean a shorter life span for your carnauba wax coat. If you enjoy regular waxing, then the life span of a carnauba wax is just one more reason to indulge in your favorite hobby!

In a nutshell, carnauba car wax is the wax of enthusiasts. It appeals to people who want the absolute most stunning show car shine available and are willing to spend a couple of hours every month or so to get it. Most of them will tell you it is time well spent.

Paint Sealants

Paint sealants are kind of the anti-carnauba. They last a lot longer and there's nothing natural about them. This is surface science at its best.

A paint sealant is made of polymers, which are composed of tens of thousands of synthetic particles that are linked together. When a sealant bonds to your vehicle's paint, it forms a rigid shell. It is not the warm carnauba that seems to melt into the paint. Paint sealants sit on top of the paint like a transparent chain metal suit. They are glossy and slick, but carnauba lovers will tell you they do not have the warmth and depth of a carnauba.

Paint sealants have gotten progressively more popular as time goes on. Some people really love the hard-as-glass look. In an industry that is driven by technology, it seems appropriate that an engineered paint protector is the new favorite among many detailers. However, the real selling point of a paint sealant is the durability. A premium paint sealant can last 4 to 6 months, sometimes longer.

As you've seen, there are a lot of differences between paint sealants and natural carnauba waxes. Glassy, hard shell or deep, liquid shine? Six months or six weeks? These are the basic questions you have to answer before selecting your paint protection.

However, a growing number of enthusiasts simply refuse to choose. Instead, they coat their vehicles with a layer of sealant for long-lasting protection and then top it with a layer of carnauba for the dazzling shine. Even if you forget to reapply carnauba in 6 weeks, your paint won't suffer.