

# GOOD BRUSHES



By BERTON ELLIOT

THE real value of a paintbrush is not in the kind of ferrule or the size and shape of the handle but in the bristles. Of course, a quality brush will have a handle designed to make the whole thing balance to a nicety and it will be shaped to fit the hand comfortably. The ferrule will be made to assure rigidity of the handle, but after all, the bristles do the work.

Hog bristles imported from China are especially adapted for paintbrushes, as they have and retain a natural elasticity and springiness possessed by no other kind of bristle. The flag ends, Figs. 1, 2 and 3 are an especially valuable feature as will be seen from Fig. 3. These flag or flagellated ends enable the brush to hold the paint and spread it evenly in a thin film. Mixed bristles are nearly always used in large brushes, that is, some stiff and some softer bristles are uniformly distributed in the same brush, to give the required degree of elasticity for the size and kind of work it is to do. In some brushes, also, both long and short bristles are used in the same brush—a small percentage of the shorter bristles with their flag ends being useful to help prevent the paint leaking down the handle when working on ceilings or high surfaces.

For wall painting, inside and outside, a flat wall brush, Fig. 4, is used. The professional painter usually prefers a long-bristle brush, Fig. 9, for the reason that it holds more paint, therefore requiring fewer dips to the paint pot, and enabling one to cover more square feet of surface per

# for GOOD PAINTING

What a master painter looks for when he picks out brushes for various jobs; how he uses the brushes and how he keeps them in good working condition

day. A long-bristle brush will also last longer under steady, continuous service. For the amateur, however, a short-bristle brush, Fig. 10, is better, as one must be experienced in order to use the long-bristle brush. The former, if made of high quality bristles properly balanced, will do good work and costs considerably less. Wall brushes are made in various widths from 3 in. to 5 in., the most popular being the 3½ and 4-in. sizes.

For varnishing, enameling and lacquering, a flat varnish brush is ordinarily used. Most of the high-grade varnish brushes are made with a chisel or tapered edge, being so shaped to permit easier flowing of the varnish, enamel or lacquer. Flat varnish brushes come in different widths from 1 in. to 3 in., the width used depending upon the size and nature of the surface to be finished. For window sash, spindles, scroll work, etc., the painter uses a sash brush—a small-size tool from 1 to 2 in. wide for working in close places, and a wider one for larger trim work. Sash and trim brushes are made with a long handle. Another type that should be mentioned here is the calcimine brush which is usually about 7 or 8 in. wide, with a sturdy handle, as shown in Fig. 16. The important thing about calcimine brushes is their care. They should be washed in clean water immediately after using, the bristles straightened out, and the brush hung up by the handle to dry. The calcimine brush should never be used in oil paints. Careful painters always use a dusting brush for cleaning dust, cobwebs and soot off the surface before painting. Dusting brushes are made in the same general way as the ordinary paintbrush, but with finer bristles and are available in both flat and round styles.

Having selected the proper size and type of paintbrush for your work, its



Testing spring of bristles

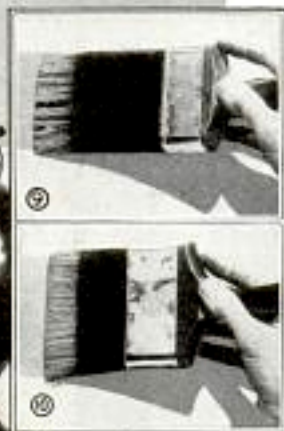


SOLID-CENTER BRUSH

Thorough mixing



*Avoid laps on interior work*



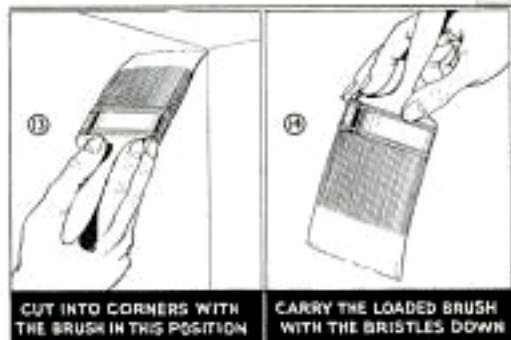
quality is not so easily determined, as it is difficult to distinguish a good brush from a poor one by appearance alone. Here are some of the principal points the painter desiring a high quality tool looks for when buying a brush: First and foremost is whether the brush has a large percentage of full-length bristles. The painter also wants to know whether the brush is 100 per cent hog bristles, as some cheaper brushes contain vegetable fiber, horsehair and other substitutes which do not have the valuable flag ends. In some of the cheaper brushes, also, the bristles have not been treated to permanently take out the curl. A brush with bristles which tend to curl is useless. One practical test for quality in a new brush is to bend the bristles over the back of the hand as in Fig. 5. Tested in this way a good brush will show considerable spring and elasticity. In the

calcimine brush the bristles are usually set in the handle in two banks or sections to form an open center as in Fig. 6. In paintbrushes of the wall type the bristles are generally cemented together and set in the handle in three sections as in the lower illustration. These sectional views show this construction only in a general way, as manufacturers use different methods. In a high-grade brush, there are always a few loose bristles which have not become anchored in the setting but these will soon work out in use. Before using a new brush, strike it smartly across the edge

of a board several times to throw out dirt particles. Then work out any loose bristles with the fingers. Finally dip the brush in turpentine and work it on a clean board or piece of paper.

Before you start painting any surface it is of the utmost importance that the paint be thoroughly mixed, Fig. 7, and thinned to an easy brushing consistency. If the paint "drags" under the brush it is too thick. In applying paint of any kind, the brush should be dipped into the liquid only about one-third the length of the bristles as in Fig. 11, and the excess paint slapped off against the pail as in Fig. 12. When carrying the brush from the pail to the work, keep the loaded bristles down as in Fig. 14. This prevents the paint running into the bristles close to the ferrule. In painting you hold the brush easily in much the same manner that you hold a pencil in

drawing a line, Fig. 8. Keep in mind that excess pressure on the brush will accomplish nothing, for it is the ends of the bristles that spread the paint film uniformly. On siding, Fig. 17, use as long strokes as possible, lifting the brush lightly from the surface at the end of each stroke. Never press or jab the brush into corners, as this breaks off the flag ends of the bristles. In outside house painting particularly, the paint should be brushed back and forth to work it thoroughly into the surface and draw it out into a thin film of uniform thickness. Only this method of brushing gives maximum surface protection against outdoor exposure. Flat wall paint, on the other hand, should have a minimum of brushing because you have to work faster to avoid laps. The paint is applied to a



small section and "laid off" by stroking lightly without refilling the brush. Continued brushing is likely to bring the liquid to the surface and make glossy spots, or may pile up the pigment into rough areas which will leave brush marks. In laying off, avoid a straight stroke, using instead a sweeping, curved motion. When you have to get into corners, set the loaded brush into the corner as in Fig. 13, then draw the paint away with a light, quick stroke. A somewhat similar method is used when "cutting" or tracing sash as in Fig. 15. Still another method of brushing should be used in applying varnish, enamel, or lacquer. These materials are flowed on with a full brush, the flowing stroke made first with the grain of the wood. The varnish will level to a fairly smooth finish of its own accord. It should then be stroked lightly across the grain, and, as a final





touch, with the grain, using an "empty" brush, Figs. 18 and 19.

It pays to get a good brush and keep it in good condition. Brushes should be cleaned in the proper solvent liquid immediately after using. Those that have been used in paint may be cleaned with gasoline, naphtha, turpentine or benzine—gasoline being cheaper, and fully satisfactory. Brushes that have been used in var-

nish or enamel should be cleaned with turpentine or benzine only, never with gasoline or naphtha, as these solvents cause the varnish gums to "curdle" or form into small solid particles which will come out on the surface when doing the next job. Shellac brushes are always cleaned with wood alcohol—lacquer brushes with lacquer thinner. Clean thoroughly by submerging the brush and working the cleaning liquid well up into the bristles with the fingers, Fig. 20. Shake the brush vigorously to throw out the dirty cleaning liquid and undissolved particles of paint, then wash again in clean solvent. Straighten the bristles with a wire brush as in Fig. 21 and follow by a thorough washing in soap and water as in Fig. 22. While many master painters do not recommend cleaning brushes in water, it will help to get the brush thoroughly clean and is safe so long as the bristles do not become water soaked and swelled. When cleaned in this way, the brush should be dried carefully, the bristles straightened and then wrapped in paper. Brushes should never be stood on end, as this tends to curl the bristles and destroy the working shape. Always lay them flat or suspend them by the handles in a covered container in which is enough linseed oil and solvent to cover the bristles. If the brushes are unused for some time don't forget to replace the liquid lost by evaporation. You'll find it's good economy to keep several brushes on hand and use separate ones for painting, varnishing, lacquering and enameling. If, for example, you use a varnish brush for paint it will be impossible to clean it satisfactorily for use in varnish again. Of course, a paint-brush is useless for applying varnish, no matter how carefully it is cleaned.