

# What's a 'Deluxe' Pickup Stick?

Overheard aboard a bareboat charter at the Bitter End on Tortola, British Virgin Islands, at sunset circa 1978: "I wish George would hurry up and whack all those big orange balls out of the way, so we can anchor."

There are still many places where snagging a mooring requires someone who knows the business end of a boat hook, but in most of New England's municipal harbors, the ubiquitous mast buoy has made the chore infinitely easier. These "pickup sticks" are now standard in the region (much to the chagrin of area divorce lawyers).

If you are tasked with maintaining your own mooring—and you don't yet have a good pickup stick—we can recommend a replacement: a "deluxe" mooring buoy from Island Mooring Supplies. Now, before the idea of a deluxe pickup stick starts you choking with laughter, please bear with us.

After many years in the commercial shipping industry, David Homan began making mast mooring buoys in the basement of his home on Prudence

Island, a sparsely populated patch of land in Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay, accessible only by ferry. Seven years later, Homan's Island Mooring Systems now has sold thousands of the mast buoys, mostly to yacht clubs and town harbors. You'll find his buoys everywhere from New York's Larchmont Yacht Club to Jamestown Boat Yard in Rhode Island.

Homan's 6-foot model (\$42) is the most popular. Expensive? Maybe, but it is virtually indestructible.

There's not much to a mast buoy—a long stick, a float, and some lead on the bottom—but Homan adds a few subtle touches that make it much more durable than your average stick. The pole itself is quarter-inch solid fiberglass coated with a thick, bright orange, UV-resistant polypropylene sleeve that adds another 1/8-inch to the stick's diameter. The lead weight is hot-dipped in Plasticsolve acrylic, so its totally sealed from the salt water. The buoy is your basic industrial strength 5- by 11-inch lobster buoy. Delrin

*Protected by UV-resistant polypropylene, Island Mooring Supplies' pickup stick is virtually indestructible and splinter free.*

washers and sleeves and stainless-steel clamps hold the buoy in place. The only thing missing is some SOLAS reflective tape at the top, which is easy enough to add.

We tried are best to break the pole but couldn't. If you do, there is no warranty, but Hamon says he's never had one come back.

The poles are sold at marinas and chandleries, or you can order one online from [www.hamiltonmarine.com](http://www.hamiltonmarine.com). ▲



**CONTACT**

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# Weather Radar for Windows Phones

We know the drill now. If we feature a Mac product, we have to appease the PC crowd, and vice versa. Otherwise, the earth spins off its axis and our inbox starts smoking. So while the iPhone crowd gets their fill with our review of navigation apps (page 24), here's a morsel for readers using Windows Mobile devices.

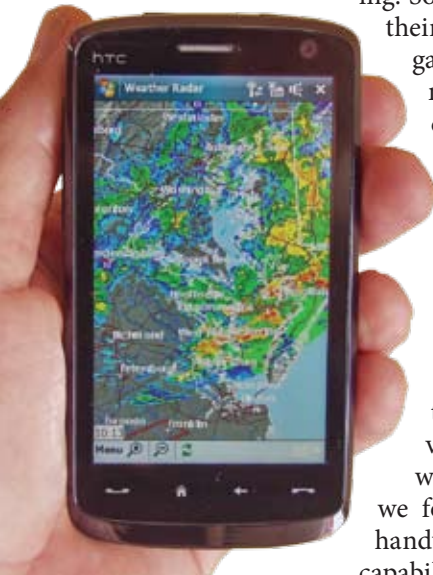
After testing several navigation programs for Windows Mobile handhelds in December 2009, we had the opportunity to evaluate Memory-Map's Weather Radar for Windows Mobile cellphones.

While many of the applications for Windows Mobile devices left us wondering if these were more gadgets than tools, we found this application quite handy. Most phones with Internet capabilities will have some access to

useful weather data, even weather radar, but the interface can be clunky or impossible.

Memory-Map's Weather Radar makes getting a decent—if small—radar picture easy. This useful bit of software can download and display a National Weather Service Doppler radar image, complete with animation. Priced at \$9.95, the only after charge for its use is the data service fee you normally pay your cellular provider. The base map (50 to 100 kB) for your region is downloaded and saved the first time you download a radar image. After that, the size of the data download varies from 1 to 2 kB for a clear sky to about 10 kB if there's heavy rain in the area.

If you own a Windows Mobile phone, sail in an area known for its thunderstorm activity, and the local waters are covered by NWS Doppler radar, then the simple interface on Memory-Map's Weather Radar will be well worth the \$10. ▲



**CONTACT**

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# Shurhold Shines

**P**ractical Sailor's endless testing of hull waxes and polishes gives us ample opportunity to try out electric buffers. We've used countless brands and types over the years—from cheapos to professional grade—and decided to see how Shurhold Industries' new Dual-Action Polisher compared.

Florida-based Shurhold touts its new variable speed (2,500-6,500 rpm) random-orbital polisher as a do-it-yourselfer's tool that offers professional results. The lightweight polisher (about 5 pounds) has some great features: six speeds, quick-change pads, an extra long heavy-duty cord (20 feet), and a special GFCI plug that helps prevent electric shock in wet environments. Designed for marine use, the polisher comes with a rugged toolbag, a wrench for changing pads, a carbon brush, and two handles, one that is adjustable and the standard 90-degree handle.

PS tested the Shurhold on the well-oxidized hull of a 21-foot powerboat.

Testers reported that the dual-action tool was relatively quiet and easy to operate. The job went fast, and the finish was top notch. However, it is worth noting that technique, pad selection, and polish choice can matter as much as tool selection. We've gotten great results from \$50 rotary polishers, too, but a dual-action polisher offers the DIYer a little more margin for error. (For tips, see [www.practical-sailor.com/tools/gel-coat\\_maintenance.html](http://www.practical-sailor.com/tools/gel-coat_maintenance.html).)

For buffing and waxing, the \$150 Shurhold matched our \$200 7-9-inch DeWalt DW849 rotary polisher and weighs less. Key distinctions are the Shurhold's smaller pads (5.5 to 6-inches), dual-action, and higher minimum speed. The small pads get into tighter spaces, but some of our favorite products like 3M Finesse-it II call for a slower turning speed.

Another con testers noted about the Shurhold is its short warranty: one



year. DeWalt tools are backed by three-year warranties, and Milwaukee gives its power tools have five-years.

The Shurhold DA polisher is well made, easy to use, comparatively inexpensive, and performs great. If you own a small to mid-size boat and covet a super-shiny hull, the Shurhold is a fine choice for buffing, waxing, and polishing projects. But if you own a large boat, understand polishing, and need a more versatile tool, a good 7- to 9-inch device than also can sand and grind would be our first choice. ▲

**CONTACT**  
**SHURHOLD INDUSTRIES**  
 772/287-1313, [www.shurhold.com](http://www.shurhold.com)

# K2r Works on Canvas, Carpet, and Teak

**A**s all boatowners know, spills and stains are inevitable, particularly when you count children among your crew. Our heavily trafficked teak cabin soles and fabric-covered settees have seen their fair share of misfortune, so we keep our ears open for any recommended stain removers. A recent hunt for a product to clean stains from teak led us to K2r SpotLifter, which came highly recommended by Teak Decking Systems' Jeff Scott.

Manufactured by Connecticut-based American Home Foods, K2r has been around for 40 years and comes in several aerosol and liquid formulas for removing (SpotLifter) and preventing (StainStopper) stains. The K2r marine cleaner is marketed as a stain lifter for canvas, carpets, fabric, and teak.

We tested it on a red-wine stain on unfinished teak, mildew stains on bamboo, and an ink stain on polyester-blend upholstery, with good results in all tests.

The aerosol cleaner was easy to apply and clean up. We sprayed it onto the soiled teak, upholstered seat, and bamboo cutting board, allowed it to dry for a few minutes, and then used the bottle's top (a molded, plastic scrubber brush) to scrub away the stains. As the acetone and methyl acetate formula dried, it became a powder that was easily wiped away or vacuumed up. PS

recommends users open all ports and hatches when applying K2r belowdecks, and be mindful of the amount you are applying to a certain area. Using too much can make a mess.

A single application and moderate scrubbing made the ink stain disappear. The red wine and mildew stains were a bit more stubborn. The wine required two applications and a good scrubbing before it was gone. The mildewed bamboo cutting board never came totally clean, but it was significantly improved, and K2r makes no claim as a bamboo cleaner.

A 12-ounce aerosol (no CFCs) spray can of K2r costs about \$13 and can be found at Ace and True Value hardware stores, some supermarkets, and West Marine. While the can's scrubber top made cleaning easy, testers also appreciated its no-rust bottom rim. A plastic cap is fit over the can bottom to keep it from leaving rust.

K2r Spotlifter Marine gets two thumbs-up as a stain remover. It's effective, and testers liked that it can clean cushions and "raw" teak. Keep in mind that it has acetone in it, so it should never be used on varnished wood, plastic, or waterproof fabrics. ▲



**CONTACT: K2R, 203/732-4479, [www.k2rbrands.com](http://www.k2rbrands.com)**

The Launch Alert transmitter mounts at the trailer's "waterline." The alarm (inset, top) clips to a sun visor when not in use.



## Trailer Helper

The concept behind Quality Mark Inc.'s Launch Alert is simple: A 12-volt DC wireless receiver/alarm plugs into a cigarette lighter outlet in the towing vehicle, and a waterproof, battery-operated transmitter/sensor mounts on the trailer. To install, you attach the transmitter (using a very sticky peel-and-stick backing) to the trailer frame so that its sensors are at your desired "waterline." When the contacts are immersed, the receiver in the vehicle beeps loudly.

You're probably thinking what we were: bilge alarm. Indeed, it will work as a bilge alarm, too, although we'd

opt first for a hard-wired alarm and use this as a backup. (If it were fully battery-operated, it might be a useful bilge alarm on boats without DC systems.)

It took five minutes to install the Launch Alert, and it worked as advertised, immediately sounding when the test trailer hit the right spot. Testers noted that once the sensor is wet, the alarm continues to sound even when the sensor is no longer in the water. So if you back too far and want to pull out and use it again, you must manually dry the sensors off, or wait for them to dry, which can take several minutes.

Also, contrary to what the product description implies, the Launch Alert does not indicate water depth. It tells you when you've backed far enough for launching at the ramp where you installed it. Generally, this initial setting will work at other ramps at various tides, but not always.

Finally, there is a minor concern that if the Launch Alert fails to sound, you might continue backing up until your socks get soggy.

With its \$50 pricetag, we wouldn't put it on our must-have list, but if you do a lot of trailering by yourself, it will come in handy. We plan to keep using this on our boat and will report back if anything worth noting crops up. ▲

### CONTACT

LAUNCH ALERT, 651/462-2513,  
www.qualitymarkinc.com

## TruPlug is a Handy Emergency-kit Tool

Spring is here, and that means it's time for systems and safety checks. Among the items that should be on your to-do list are checking your seacocks and making sure essential safety gear is on board. For us, that has always included keeping an inventory of soft wood thru-hull plugs for plumbing emergencies, but this year, we decided to also add a few of Forespar's new closed-cell foam TruPlugs.

The TruPlug is more versatile than a traditional wood plug. Like the tapered wood plugs, the 9-inch-long, cone-shaped TruPlug can be used to stop or slow leaks at a thru-hull, but it also can be crammed longways into a hull breach or cut to fit varying sizes of busted hoses, broken pipes, or any irregular hole up to 4 inches in diameter.

Invented by a sailor, the TruPlug is manufactured by Artelier Studio of California and distributed by Forespar. It is made of a soft, proprietary foam that allows it to be compressed to fit an irregular opening. Where wood plugs often must be pounded in place by a hammer, the TruPlug can be inserted by hand or using a screwdriver or putty knife. Once it's inserted, the cone de-compresses to fill the space, slowing or stopping leaks.

Practical Sailor found the TruPlug easy to cut to size,

using scissors and a knife. Cut sections of the plug, where there was no sealer coating, tended to absorb water during testing, but the amount was minimal and would not affect the plug's ability to stem a leak.

One benefit testers noted of the wood plugs over the TruPlug was the fact that the traditional plugs come with drilled holes for attaching them to seacocks via a lanyard so they are readily available in an emergency. It would be easy enough to cut the TruPlug to fit a particular seacock and hang it by a lanyard, but that would negate the benefit of the TruPlug's adaptability to an unexpected leak.

Its price, \$20 per plug, is comparable to a similar-sized wood plug. A set of four or five smaller wood plugs (up 1.5 inches in diameter) runs about \$15.

In our opinion, the TruPlug is an innovative product, and it would be wise to keep a few on hand for unexpected emergencies. But we still recommend keeping an inventory of various-sized wood plugs, and we plan to continue our practice of hanging a properly sized plug near each thru-hull on our boats. ▲



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