



PS contributor Dave Gill assembles the field of electric flush toilets for a preliminary round of testing.

Going Bananas? Go Sailing

The back of our workshop in Sarasota, Fla., is crowded with paints and thinners, rags and brushes, dusty pallets and power tools, and now, a small mountain of electric flush toilets. Since I have a long-running feud with manual toilets, I don't deserve nor want an electric-flush version. But there are apparently plenty of readers who are contemplating push-button porcelain thrones, and who am I to deny them this indulgence?

I was surveying our field of 11 contenders on the Friday before Labor Day along with *PS* tester Dave Gill, a stalwart contributor who was probably wishing he hadn't done such a

bang-up job evaluating holding tank sensors for us back in 2008.

"So what do you want me to do with these things?" he asked.

Lined up along the workshop's front wall, right next to a tower of empty bottom paint boxes, the toilets resembled a row of marble tombstones. More worrisome were the bunch of bananas piled on the nearby workbench. This evaluation, I began to suspect, would be the end of us both.

The aim of our meeting was to confirm that the proposed protocol would be accurate and manageable. There were some technical concerns, and these had to be fleshed (flushed?) out before the actual testing began.

I've spent too many years on the water to not appreciate the importance of what we do at *Practical Sailor*, but as Dave and I contemplated the ingredients for our test—the bananas, carefully measured strips of toilet paper—and the row of shiny new electric flush toilets, I grew worried that our noble calling had reached a new low. Surely, there must be more purposeful activities for a Friday afternoon.

"Dave, do you think the bananas are ripe enough?" I asked. "They seem a little too firm to me."

"I suppose we could let them ripen for a few days," concluded Dave, after giving this idea some careful thought. "How firm do they need to be?"

I will spare the sordid details of a long, serious discussion between two sailors regarding the proper density of a banana destined to be flushed down a toilet. This is, after all a family publication. If you want to find out how electric toilets hold up to challenging flushes, or how *Practical Sailor's* editor wards off the angst that comes with administering such a test, you will have to wait until the February issue.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy our semiannual update on bottom paints (page 13), our test of UV protective clothing (page 19), and our final round of bilge pump testing (page 26). Even more importantly, I hope you and your family and friends make time to go sailing this month. Early autumn is one of the finest times of the year to be sailing in North America and I hope you make the most of it. I know I will.

Even with bottom paints hitting the \$250-per-gallon mark, sailing is still much cheaper than therapy. . .and a whole lot more fun.

Cover photo: A Catalina 375 reaches across Biscayne Bay, Fla. (Photo by Billy Black, courtesy of Catalina Yachts)

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