

# The art of stalking, taming a car's worst enemy: rust

By Michael Kulaga  
Of the Emerald

Rust.

It begins as a seemingly harmless speck of brown, hardly noticeable at first. But without attention, it turns into a relentless cancer with a devastating destructive potential. It has been known to consume bicycles, whole cars and even bridges. But with precautionary measures, it can be tamed.

Metal corrosion is a chemical change caused by the oxidation of iron that has been exposed to moist air (an item not in short supply during Oregon winters). And in this brief description lies the clue to its prevention. Metal must be protected from the air; which is why cars, bridges, bicycles and everything else made of iron-based alloys are painted.

Rust on automobiles begins when the painted surface is punctured, allowing air to reach the unprotected surface. Once corrosion has begun, drastic measures must be taken to prevent its further spread.

This means surgically removing the corroded area and resurfacing the metal to prevent further oxidation. But while the process may seem intimidating, it doesn't take a degree from Baby Doc College of Physicians to root out rust and prevent its return. Preventing rust from claiming your vehicle takes only a few simple steps.

- Locate corroded areas on the vehicle. Some of these areas will be obvious, but others will be more difficult to find. Look for rust, bubbles in the paint and uneven surface spots.

- Thoroughly wash the area that needs attention.

- Sand the rusted area. This is the most important step in stopping the oxidation process

because the metal will continue to corrode if the rust is not completely removed.

Sandpaper comes in various types and grades of coarseness. Aluminum oxide and silicone carbide are best-suited for metal work. The paper grade is indicated by a numbering system, with the higher numbers being finer and better suited for finishing work. Generally, a No. 40 works well for removing rust and paint.

- Feather the edges of the paint that surrounds the sanded area. After the initial sanding, the metal should have a shiny silver appearance. Use a fine paper (No. 100) to smooth the edge of the paint around the sanded area. You should not be able to distinguish the edge of the paint from the bare metal by feel.

- Chemically clean the sanded area. Use a solvent, such as denatured alcohol, to remove dust, wax and any grit from the area to be painted. Do this in a well-ventilated area and use a clean, dry cloth to wipe off the solvent.

- Prime the bare metal. Mask off all trim, glass, vinyl and any other nearby areas that shouldn't be painted. Use a paint specifically made for priming bare metals. Paint can be either sprayed or brushed, but sprayed paint generally provides a smoother finish. Carefully follow directions for applying the paint.

- Sand and clean the primed surface for a smooth finish. After the primer is completely dry, use a fine sandpaper to even out any imperfections in the coat and then use a solvent again to wash away dust and grime.

- Apply the finish paint. This coat can either closely resemble the hue of the original paint, although it is never a perfect match, or it can be

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# Rainfall not nature's carwash

The onset of Oregon's winter rainy season shouldn't be taken as a cue to put the hose, sponge and soap away and let Mother Nature take over the car-washing for a few months.

If anything, nature will do more harm than good.

According to Richard Chala, co-owner of Eugene Quality Car Wash, rain passes through pollutants such as emissions

from burning slash and wood stoves or fireplaces. "The rain that lands on your car can ruin the paint finish," Chala says.

Chala adds that road sand or salt (which is spread on many streets and roads during icy or snowy weather), has a detrimental effect on car and truck finishes.

And during the bathless winter months, Chala says, dirt

and dust can accumulate on the surface of a vehicle to such a degree that the first spring washing of one's car or truck has a sandpaper-like effect on the vehicle's finish.

Chala emphasizes it is as important to continue washing one's car or truck as often during the cold, blowy, rainy season as one would during the warm sunny months of summer.


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