



MICROSCOPY

101

We appreciate the response to this publication feature - and welcome all contributions. Contributions may be sent to Phil Oshel, our Technical Editor at:

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Mold Release Solution

We originally (long ago) kept our molds (at that time they were five sided metal "boats" of various sizes which had been manufactured by the machine shop) in soapy water, and merely drained out the excess fluid just prior to filling them with paraffin. After the paraffin was sufficiently hardened, we plunked the blocks in ice water, and the paraffin would eventually float out of the mold. It worked very well, but was messy, and occasionally block surfaces were minimally deformed due to soap bubbles remaining in the corners of the molds. When my level of distress over the illogically ever-increasing price of scientific supplies reached the unbearable, I came up with the following soap spray, and successfully used it with Tissue-Tek molds for years.

Mix a solution of 5% green dish washing soap (such as Palmolive) in 50% Ethanol, then put it into a pump spray bottle (available from any housewares department). This works at least as well as the outrageously expensive stuff sold as "Mold Release Spray", and contains no CFCs or other "evils".

Joanne Lahey, Battelle Duxbury Operations

A Neat Trick For Keeping Bell Jars Clean

I have to clean my bell jar quite frequently in our busy SEM/EDX lab, and have been using the spray-on release agents. I find them expensive and very ineffectual, making the bell jar cleaning process a long, hard scrub.

Last month, in frustration, I lathered up my hands with the bar soap I keep at my sink and smeared it inside my bell jar. I figured it couldn't be worse than the spray. Yesterday I wiped it with a wet sponge and everything lifted off with no effort. It does not seem to affect the high vacuum performance and you can't beat the price. Makes me wonder what I have been spending all by scarce money on all this time.

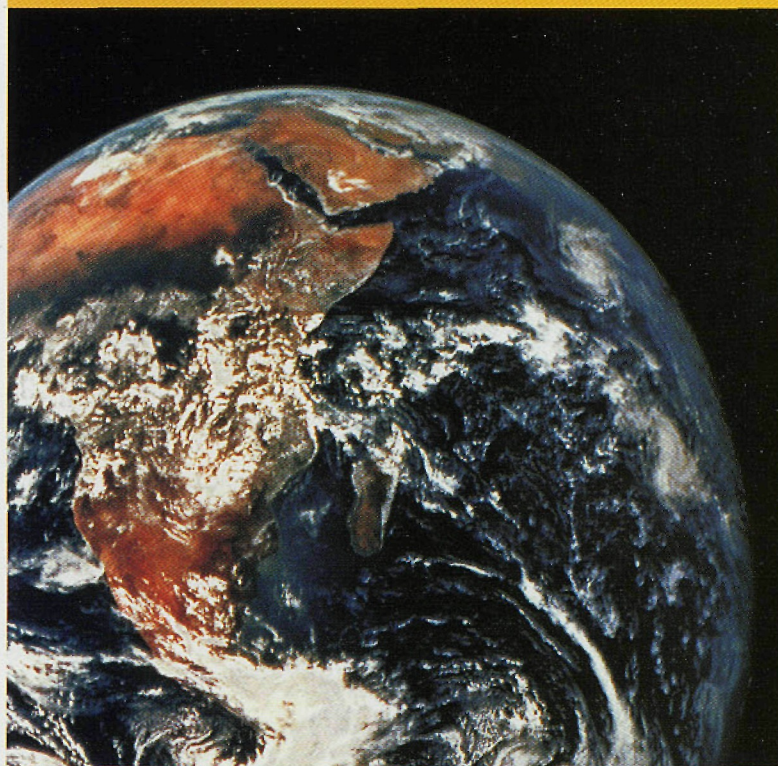
Mary Mager, University of British Columbia

A Note to New Readers:

As we normally have two full pages of Microscopy 101 information, we do appreciate all contributions. The objective is for short articles to assist others in the profession.

... Ed.

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