

# FIBERGLASSING YOUR PROPS

By Karl Gies

This discussion came up on SAM Talk. My thanks to Al Pardue who sent me some fiberglass cloth and excellent instructions. My only deviation from Al's method is using Z-Poxy which though messier to use makes for a stronger prop blade in my opinion. My tombstone has been cut and says "Often Wrong, Never In Doubt."

I use 3/4 Oz. fiberglass cloth as Al Pardue recommended and I got mine from Hobbico at his suggestion. I am about out of the cloth and found a cheaper place, go to: [http://www.raka.com/fiberglass\\_cloth\\_sub.html](http://www.raka.com/fiberglass_cloth_sub.html)

I like using Z-Poxy better than dope as it makes for a stronger prop than dope at almost no weight penalty over dope. I "size" my cloth with plain shellac spray. I cut off a large square of the cloth - use clothespins to hang it up and spray it a few times lightly. It should be slightly stiff. This cloth is almost impossible to work with unless you size it with something. Cut the cloth slightly oversize. Z-Poxy has excellent instructions on how to do the entire process including sanding instructions. I find that after applying the Z-Poxy to the prop I let it set for about ten minutes before putting the cloth on. I do the prop 1/2 at a time - do both sides of one blade. After pressing the cloth on I go around with a sharp piece of a double edged razor blade that I have broken in half and then break one half at an angle to have a sharp point. Slit the cloth all the way at around at intervals to relieve the tension that is caused by the curves and undercamber if any. This also lets it fit better on curves and particularly at the prop hub. I start the cloth at the prop hub right in the center and sometimes have to poke a wire through the shaft hole. I let this dry for awhile and then go over it again wetting my finger to smooth out any bad spots and making sure that the cloth on one side adheres to the cloth on the other side. After doing the sanding I give the prop a couple of thinned down coats of 50/50 nitrate dope. I paint my props using Michaels Design Master Floral Spray and then mist on two or three coats of Krylon clear as a fixative. I can't believe how much stronger and more rigid this makes a prop. I just did a 13" prop last night that was carved very thin from light wood and now it is tougher than nails. cheers, karl Thanks again to Al Pardue for getting me started on this method. cheers, karl gies