



## A word of caution about Fedco's tree paint formula

Posted by [Pat Pryal](#)

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[Pat Pryal](#)

[A word of caution about Fedco's tree paint formula](#)

June 12, 2017 03:50AM

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 76

Just wanted to share some info about using Fedco's tree paint formula for winter tree trunk painting. Their formula calls for 1/3 water, 1/3 interior latex paint and 1/3 drywall joint compound. I mixed some up last fall and have had some bad results with it. Almost every 1 and 2 year old whip in my orchard have been affected negatively. Some are better than others, but many are just barely pushing a leaf here and there, and a few look to be possibly dead. The 3+ older tree's seem unaffected.

I had 2 rows of 1 year old whips that I didn't paint because they are on the west side of the orchard and get some afternoon shade and they have leafed out fine and look great, so I know the paint is to blame. The trunks on the tree's look fine if you wipe away the paint residue, so I don't know how the paint harmed the tree's, but it definitely has set them back severely. I just hope I don't lose them ( almost 300 ) A week ago most had not even pushed a single bud yet, but today I see most are showing at least some leaf growth here and there. My other tree's have already sent out 4-6" of growth already so if nothing else I've lost probably close to a months growth. This really pisses me off.

I'm wondering if Fedco ever tested it on younger tree's ? If not, they should have !

Pat

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[Chris Vlitias](#)

[Re: A word of caution about Fedco's tree piant formula](#)

June 14, 2017 03:06AM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 47

Edited for brevity

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 09/30/2022 05:41PM by Chris Vlitias.

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[Jason MacArthur](#)

[Re: A word of caution about Fedco's tree piant formula](#)

June 14, 2017 12:06PM

Registered: 6 years ago

Posts: 28

I have used this formula several times over the years on trees of mixed ages, including very young whips, and I have never seen the type of damage you describe.

Sorry for the loss!

Jason

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[Pat Pryal](#)

[Re: A word of caution about Fedco's tree piant formula](#)

June 14, 2017 06:00PM

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 76

After going thru the orchard again last evening, most of the whips are leafing out now, but a few are not doing anything (3-4). I have no idea how the paint affected them, but it definitely did. I also put the paint on about 75 first year chestnut tree's that I'm experimenting with and they were affected even worse. Most show no life on the trunks, but are suckering up from the roots. If I ever paint tree's again it will be with a simple 50/50 mix of paint and water. IMO, Fedco's formula should be avoided on ALL tree's !

Brampton Lake Orchards

Zone 4a Upper Michigan

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[Pat Pryal](#)

[Re: A word of caution about Fedco's tree piant formula](#)

June 28, 2017 09:08PM

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 76

Final assessment looks like 5 completely dead tree's, at least 50 others that are alive but look very weak and could collapse, and most of the others showing growth, but many are only leafing out a few places along the trunk. Looks like many of the buds were killed, even

though they weren't painted over. Those that are growing are at least 3 weeks behind where they should be, the others will likely see little growth this year. So I'll likely be losing at least a years eventual production on those tree's, assuming they'll survive. Also, almost every chip bud that I did last August on some of those whips failed. And I typically get at least 90% success with my chip buds, so I'll have to do at least 50 more chip buds again this year.

Almost every one of the chestnut tree's is alive, but everything above ground is basically dead. They are suckering back out again from the roots, but once again, an entire season of growth is lost. I had to coppice them off and then prune out all but one of the suckers for the new trunk ( several hours work )

So I'm assuming that using the drywall joint compound in the mix may have been the culprit here. I did not see any harm to the 3+ year older tree's but this mixture definitely is in someway detrimental to young tree's. There must be some chemical or compound in that mixture that is able to penetrate the thin, tender bark of young whips and damages them.

I've bought seeds, scion and some brambles from Fedco in the past, but it will NEVER happen again. If I thought I could sue them I would. I seriously doubt if they ever tested that mixture on young tree's.

My tree's were doing so good, now many look like sh\*t. I don't have the time to lose tree's and production. I repeat, I would NOT use Fedco's tree paint mixture on ANY tree's of any size....ever !

Brampton Lake Orchards

Zone 4a Upper Michigan

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[Michael Phillips](#)

[Re: A word of caution about Fedco's tree paint formula](#)

June 29, 2017 02:40PM

**Moderator**

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 621

I trialed dry sheetrock powder (specifically Durabond 90) as part of a barrier mix for Roundheaded Appletree Borer (RHAB, that unholy bastard) about ten years ago. Applying this slurry in June, July, and August helped but it was just too labor intensive. Like Jason, I saw no damage whatsoever to trees of any age. My preferred method of RHAB deterrence is now a botanical trunk spray of neem oil at 1% concentration.

We each have responsibility as the grower for what we choose to do. FEDCO shared this idea at a time when recourse for RHAB was desperate for those dealing with this insect curse. I wouldn't add premixed joint compound to such a formula anyway as there are unknown additives in those products. Similar concerns come with latex paint; the cheapest can of interior white primer is always the better bet with respect to less additives in the paint. What really brings all this home is the Chinese sheetrock that literally dissolved wiring in the walls of Florida condos.

It's not fair to entirely blame FEDCO for this tree loss. Sorry it happened, sure, but this is not a product offered by these tree nursery folks nor did it cause tree losses when initially tested. Weird weather this winter caused others to lose young trees in the upper Midwest. Adding joint compound is specific to a borer situation (and again, there are better options). Mixing joint compound with paint is all the more questionable. It's good you shared this story, Pat, as now all can think about these things. I will make sure FEDCO knows to lighten up on this recommendation in their catalog.

[Lost Nation Orchard](#)

Zone 4b in New Hampshire

Edited 2 time(s). Last edit at 07/03/2017 03:07AM by Michael Phillips.

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[John Bunker](#)

[Re: A word of caution about Fedco's tree paint formula](#)

June 30, 2017 05:29AM

Registered: 6 years ago

Posts: 4

I thought I might help with the borer discussion. I'm the one who invented the mix. I don't remember what gave me the idea. Something I read somewhere I imagine. I'm not sure where you got the 1/3 each of interior latex, joint compound and water. I've always just mixed up the ingredients to be a paste that was liquid enough to paint on with a brush. One might imagine that I was rather nervous about trying it. I was. I was even more nervous about suggested that others try it. I painted it on dozens, perhaps hundreds, of my own trees before it ever went into the Fedco catalog. I did tree of every age from whips up to 10 years old or so. After that age borers are rarely a problem. I never saw any ill-effects ever on any tree I painted.

I'm terribly sorry that the writer had trees that showed distress after using their version of the mix. The problem might well have had something to do with the particular ingredients they used- or not. Putting on my Sherlock Holmes hat, perhaps the problem that the writer experienced was something unrelated entirely to the mix. Lots of things can damage a tree. Perhaps the writer used particularly toxic paint or joint compound with some bad stuff in it without be aware of the toxicity. Maybe using 1/3 water made the mix too watery and it was absorbed more readily into the bark.

In the future we'll add a line of caution and suggest that orchardists give the mix a trial run on one or two trees before using it throughout the orchard.

All the best,  
John Bunker  
Fedco Trees

[John@fedcoseeds.com](mailto:John@fedcoseeds.com)

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[Pat Pryal](#)

[Re: A word of caution about Fedco's tree paint formula](#)

July 18, 2017 03:57AM

Registered: 7 years ago

Posts: 76

There is no question whatsoever that the tree paint you suggested caused the damage to my tree's. NONE ! I've spent the last 3 weeks pruning and re-shaping all the affected tree's, including about 80 chestnut tree's that were basically killed right to the ground. Most have suckered back but they needed to be pruned to just a single stem. Almost all the apple tree whips affected lost their leader and I've spent MANY hours trimming branches to just a single leader again.

I seriously doubt if you've ever tested this mixture on 1 year whips, talk is cheap. And perhaps before you suggested a paint mix, you should have cautioned people to test it first, not wait until someone has a major problem with it. A little late to make a statement like that don't you think !?

All of these affected tree's will now have lost a year of production, that's the part that really pisses me off, along with all the time I've had to spend attending to these tree's. I still work full time and I've had to postpone many other projects around my property to deal with this problem that I feel you are responsible for. I only wish I had financial recourse !

Brampton Lake Orchards

Zone 4a Upper Michigan

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[Jason MacArthur](#)

[Re: A word of caution about Fedco's tree paint formula](#)

July 18, 2017 01:15PM

Registered: 6 years ago

Posts: 28

Pat-

I understand your frustration and I am sorry for the loss of your trees. Perhaps, for the sake of building communal knowledge, you could tell us exactly what products you used, and when and how you applied them.

I will say that I have used a mix of interior paint and joint compound almost every year for the last 10 years on trees of all ages, including many whips, without seeing the type of damage you describe.

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