



Saponification? Emulsifying Neem with Soap

Posted by [Tim Bates](#)

[Forum List](#) [Message List](#) [New Topic](#)

[Tim Bates](#)

[Saponification? Emulsifying Neem with Soap](#)

March 27, 2013 06:34PM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 58

I have just been told by my certifier that adding soap to emulsify neem oil causes saponification which makes "it" synthetic and therefore not allowed (not her exact words) for certified organic. Egads! What next? I will go and try adding Nu Film P (as an adjuvant, not heavens knows, as a saponifer/emulsifier) but don't have much hope. Has anyone tried using something else? I thought I (and you) fell under NOP 205.206 c. Disease problems may be controlled through 2) Application of non synthetic, biological, botanical, or mineral inputs. ergo. compost tea, neem, EM and hosts of other homebrews. Michael has been very careful in almost always suggesting "approved for organic materials" -- maybe a perusal of the appendixes again -- just checked, I don't think even Dr Bronners certified soap would be allowed under this scenario.

Any certified folks out there who have approval for the soap/neem process? Help!

[The Apple Farm](#)

Zone 8b in California

Edited 2 time(s). Last edit at 03/28/2013 09:27PM by Michael Phillips.

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Tim Bates](#)

[Re: Saponification - Emulsifying Neem with Soap--oops](#)

March 27, 2013 10:33PM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 58

I just reread the saponification sentence out loud and found I misinterpreted what the certifier said. She was referring to the soap making process as resulting in a synthetic product...not me saponifying the neem with soap. I replied to that asking if I made my own soap from lye and fats would I then be a chemist making synthetic product..have not heard back yet. Also Nu film P does not emulsify. Tim

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Michael Phillips](#)

[Re: Saponification - Emulsifying Neem with Soap](#)

March 28, 2013 12:44AM

Moderator

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 621

I could say a few things about your particular certifier ... but let's just suggest this person apparently would prefer not to bathe than risk the dangers of good ol' soap. You have hit on the definition of *saponification*, which is the making of actual soap. Whereas we are using such a little amount of biodegradable soap to emulsify neem oil so it mixes readily into water in the spray tank. I for one am glad you are beyond that attempt with NuFilm to do the same.

Some certifiers accept the use of Ecover and Seventh Generation dishwashing soap -- both "natural" brands -- to emulsify neem. This is what I use, one quarter cup liquid soap to a half gallon of pure neem oil. Other certifiers insist it be Dr. Bronners, and then the baby formulation (or some such), which being a weaker soap, requires at least double the rate. The issue here is not that these soaps use dangerous ingredients to clean the plates from which we eat, but rather that OMRI has no reason to test the benign. Nor do these companies have any reason to pay the fees required for the testing. You can get coconut soap nuts from [Ahimsa Organics](#) to emulsify neem oil, this being the traditional Ayurvedic method. I have not tried this ... because biodegradable soap works so, so fine.

To be blunt: **This is a human problem.** It has nothing to do with the health of the orchard, the health of the soil, or the nutrient density of the fruit we grow. Organic certification is a choice. I for one do not support the current version.

[Lost Nation Orchard](#)

Zone 4b in New Hampshire

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 03/28/2013 03:15AM by Michael Phillips.

[Reply](#) [Quote](#)

[Tim Bates](#)

[Re: Saponification - Emulsifying Neem with Soap](#)

March 28, 2013 02:01AM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 58

OK, OK. Thanks Michael and for the phone call warning about Nu Film and an even more blunt remark about certifiers. At this point I am too big not to be certified--but I keep thinking about how I can get out and keep my market--another discussion--maybe under marketing. I think (hope) that my certifier would be mollified if I can show the approval for this from other certifiers or that saponification is not a synthetic process. I sent Michael the whole dialogue so far with my certifier. Once again does anybody have approval for soap? Maybe Michael knows who? I have been using (Shhhh!)New Age Household Cleaner--Biodegradable and "natural" etc.and more local than Ecover (Belgium) and 7th Gen. (not west coast) etc. Tim

[Reply Quote](#)

[Jim Gallott](#)

[Re: Saponification - Emulsifying Neem with Soap](#)

March 31, 2013 05:51PM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 10

Just happened to think- Safer Insecticidal Soap is OMRI approved, so saponification per se does not exclude something from approval.

Jim Gallott

New Haven, VT USDA Zone 5a

[Reply Quote](#)

[Tim Bates](#)

[Re: Saponification? Emulsifying Neem with Soap](#)

March 31, 2013 09:40PM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 58

Hmmmm, I had thought about Safer but just in passing and forgot. Thanks for the reminder. I will run it by my certifier--who has gotten strangely silent since I suggested making my own soap (with lye and fat and ashes) would probably not do it either plus no response to Dr Bronner (that request was on Good Friday maybe forgive that one til tomottow)---which if Michael is right that you need twice as much and it is nearly twice the price easily triples the cost. I think I have some safers on hand--will test it's emulsifying effects tomorrow. Priobably even more costly. Certification=Compliance=Itchy Underwear--Lynn Miller Tim

[Reply Quote](#)

[Tim Bates](#)

[Re: Saponification? Emulsifying Neem with Soap](#)

April 19, 2013 08:29PM

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 58

Reporting in--Safers works quite satisfactorily as an emulsifier at pretty much the same rate as New Age or Seventh Generation for me. I have faound that 8-10 oz is enough for a gallon of Neem. If you are bigger like me the product is M-PEDE. Safers only comes in 16-32 oz sizes. So if you are certified Organic you ask to use Safers or M-PEDE as an insecticide and happen to be adding it when putting on your neem to not waste deisel on two different sprays. The timing for aphid control and spring neem sprays is the same--aphids, watch out! I haven't done the cost analysis yet since I don't have the M-PEDE bill yet. I have the MSDS for New Age Soap and will submit to certifier after I make a few inquiries.

[Reply Quote](#)

[Josh Karp](#)

[Re: Saponification? Emulsifying Neem with Soap](#)

May 05, 2013 04:07AM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 18

I found some OMRI listed soap nuts which my certifier has approved for use - haven't tried them yet (still in the mail) but planning on making a liquid soap from them and using that as an emulsifier.

[Reply Quote](#)

[Brandt Schisler](#)

[Re: Saponification? Emulsifying Neem with Soap](#)

January 24, 2023 05:59PM

Registered: 5 years ago

Posts: 28

Looking for some feedback, especially from Tim Bates if possible. We made the jump to holistic orcharding about 4 years ago and have had success. I have been using seventh generation as an emulsifier during this whole time because it is on the OEFFA approved products list, however, through review with our Organic Certifier he mentioned that it is only approved for cleaning with a rinse and should not be in contact with organic land or products. What a head scratcher. So, wanted to spark this conversation back up and see if anyone is aware of an emulsifier that works great with neem oil, won't break the bank, and will make the almighty approvers happy?

Brandt Schisler

Hickory Ridge Orchard

Mexico, MO

Zone 6b

[Reply Quote](#)

[Steve Dagger](#)

[Re: Saponification? Emulsifying Neem with Soap](#)

January 30, 2023 08:46PM

Registered: 9 years ago

Posts: 28

Brandt - Tim is listed in the grower profiles under the Apple Farm if you want to contact him directly. I could be wrong on this but in my experience organic certifiers are now accepting biodegradable soaps for use in emulsifying.

[Pommes de Terre Acres](#)

USDA Zone 5 - Dixon, Montana

Intermountain West Region

[Reply Quote](#)

[Newer Topic](#) [Older Topic](#)

[Print View](#) [RSS](#)

Sorry, only registered users may post in this forum.

[Click here to login](#)

This [forum](#) is powered by [Phorum](#).