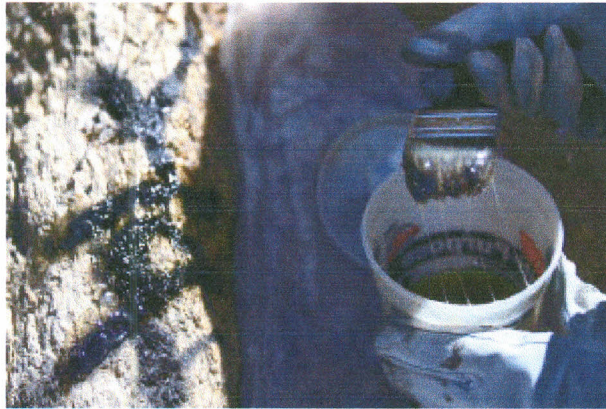


'Elephant Snot' not answer for cleaning damaged saguaros



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Elephant Snot isn't the answer.

Saguaro National Park officials tested a viscous product — with the odd brand name of Elephant Snot — to remove graffiti from saguaros at the park.

It didn't work.

"Elephant Snot is out," said Brad Shattuck, chief of maintenance for the park. "It was

corrosive. On the two tests we tried, it did some cracking on the saguaro. So we stopped. Obviously, we want to clean the saguaros without hurting them."

Shattuck said there's still hope for removing graffiti from 11 saguaros along the Douglas Spring Train in the park's east district that were defaced in May.

Tucsonan Carlos Peters Gandara Jr., 15, is facing felony charges in the vandalism case.

"We'll be testing three different products this week" that show promise for safely removing graffiti from cacti, Shattuck said.

The effectiveness of the products won't be known immediately.

"It takes from eight to 12 weeks for problems to be detected" such as those that showed up after the Elephant Snot tests earlier this summer, Shattuck said. "We'll watch this closely. We want to make sure we clean the saguaros in a way that doesn't hurt the plants."

If one of the products being tested proves effective at cleaning and not harming the saguaros, it could be useful elsewhere in the Tucson area.

One site is a spot along the Pantano River Park Trail near East Broadway, where taggers defaced saguaros with spray-painted graffiti in 2011. The graffiti remains on the plants.

"I'd be happy to share any solutions we find" to clean saguaros at the river park site, Shattuck said.