

Fill it, sand it, paint it

In a recent column on paint preparation, I talked about Zinsser's M-M Ready Patch, which I use to fill cracks in plaster before painting indoors and which works well in exterior applications.

Lloyd Vernon, a reader and professional handyman, recommends a flexible joint compound, available at Home Depot and manufactured by ATI Corp., that he's been using for a couple of years.

The product, ATI Flexible Joint Compound, costs about \$9 a gallon.

The compound sets up in a very short time, but "repairs I've made to bad cracks, particularly in plaster, have held up to date with no return of the cracks," Vernon said.

He said the compound is harder to sand than the instructions state, but seems to do the job.

Vernon also seconded my recommendation about washing any surface before painting and priming.

"We both know how important it is to clean the surface for good adhesion, yet I run into many customers who can't understand why you need to wash walls that will be painted anyway," Vernon said.

Vernon and several other readers misplaced the phone number and company name that sells the washers that are used to rancher sopping plaster to the lath.

It is the Charles St. Supply Co. in Boston. The phone number is 617-367-9046.

Another spackling compound that I've tried recently is DHP's DryDex, which is both for exterior and interior use.

DryDex goes on pink, but turns white when it is ready to be sanded.

Information: 1-800-327-8477.