

Using Your Natural Dyes



Prepare your dye bath

Use one to one ratio of weighed dye material to weight of fiber (WOF)

Refer to chart below and source books or sites for specific instructions on each dye material.

- Add natural dye materials (not fiber) to 1-2 gallons of water and heat to 180 degrees. Be careful to not boil water.
- Simmer for an hour, remove from heat and allow to steep and cool overnight.

Mordant fibers

- Thoroughly wash fiber with pH neutral soap
- If pre-cleaned fiber is dry, soak in warm water for 1-2 hours
- Weigh out correct Alum mordant: 10% of the weight of dry fiber (WOF). Aluminum Acetate for cellulose fibers and Aluminum Sulfate for Protein Fiber
- Dissolve mordant in 1 cup hot water and add to 1 gallon cold water
- Add moist fiber and bring to 190 degrees
- Simmer for one hour and allow to cool. Rinse well before using in dye bath

You only have to mordant the fiber once! You can mordant as much fiber as you want at one time and save it for later to dye or overdye. Just make sure you label it so that you know it already has the mordant added.

Dye Fibers

- Strain dye materials from water with strainer or cheesecloth. This is your dye bath.
- Add mordanted fiber to dye bath. Fiber should be pre-soaked and excess water removed.
- Bring dye bath and fiber to simmer for one hour. Be careful not to boil as wool will felt.
- Cool and allow to sit overnight. Remove fiber, rinse and allow to dry.

Remaining dye bath, the “exhaust bath”, may be used again. It will create a lighter, complimentary color to the original bath.

Dried Dye Materials

Plant	Plant Parts	Dye Color	Notes
Marigold	Petals	Yellow	1
Osage Orange	Heartwood Wood Chips	Golden Yellow	2
Starbright Zinnia	Flowers	Orange	
Rudbeckia	Flowers	Yellow	1
Walnut	Bark	Tan/Brown	2
Slippery Elm	Bark	Tan	2
Hibiscus	Flowers	Red	3
Dahlia	Flowers	Yellow	1
Elderberry	Leaves	Tan/Salmon	
Profusion Zinnia	Flowers	Yellow	1
Lavender	Leaves	Gray	
French Marigold	Flowers	Yellow	1
African Marigold	Flowers	Yellow	1
Fire Zahara Zinnia	Flowers	Orange	
Japanese Indigo	Leaves	Blues, Greens	4

1 can be overdyed with indigo to produce greens

2 soak woodchips or bark in 50/50 isopropyl alcohol and water solution for 1-2 days to produce best dye color

3 soak in vinegar to produce darker color

4 see "Dyeing with Dried Indigo Leaves" for instructions on dyeing without a vat