

The Essentialist

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Dyeing with Natural Materials Overview

Weigh dry fiber to determine Weight of Goods (WOG)



Prepare Dye Bath (*weight of plant stuff = 2 – 4 X WOG for most plants; simmer about one hour; can let sit overnight to extract more pigment; strain*)



Scour Fiber (*soak in very hot soapy water; rinse carefully 2 - 3 times*)



Pre-Mordant (*not necessary if using "substantive" dyes; rinse*)



Dye Skeins (*simmer about one hour; rinse until clear*)



Post-mordant/Afterbath/Overdye (*then rinse*)

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Mordanting and Afterbaths – Friendly Solutions

Mordants chemically prepare fiber for dyeing by causing a chemical change. Post-mordants and afterbaths adjust color after dyeing. Wear mask, goggles and gloves when working with powders. “*” indicates a favorite of Joan.

***ALUM** (*Brightens color and increases fastness; can put directly in dye pot - 7 % WOG alum + half as much tartaric acid as that, but for best results pre-mordant as follows:*)

- Dissolve **10 % WOG (weight of goods) alum and 5 % tartaric acid** (cream of tartar) in small container of hot water. (*Weigh fiber and write down weight, move decimal one space to left for weight of alum, divide that in half for tartaric acid.*)
- Fill mordant pot with water and heat it until warm.
- Stir in dissolved mordant, add warm wetted fiber, bring water to boil, and **simmer (190°) for one hour.**
- Remove fiber, spin out excess water, wash and rinse.

To reuse, dissolve additional 5 % alum and 2.5 % tartaric acid in hot water and repeat directions.

Disposal: pour on ground

TIN (*“Blooms” or brightens color, but can make wool harsh and brittle.*)

- Dissolve **0.5 % WOG** (this is a *tiny* amount) tin in small container of hot water.
- Fill mordant pot with water and heat it until warm.
- Stir in dissolved mordant, add warm wetted fiber, bring water to boil, and **simmer (190°) for one hour.**
- Remove fiber, spin out excess water, wash and rinse.

To reuse, dissolve additional 0.25% in hot water and repeat directions.

To “bloom” or brighten color, add 0.25 % directly to dye bath or simmer fiber in solution after dyeing for 5 minutes or, especially for fiber mordanted with alum, for last 5 minutes.

Disposal: pour in weak solution on ground away from gardens, septic tanks and children’s play areas.

***COPPER** (*Brings out green or tones by moving toward green on color wheel*)

- Dissolve **2 % WOG copper sulfate** (WOG X .02) in small container of hot water.
- Fill mordant pot with water and heat it until warm.
- Stir in dissolved mordant, add warm wetted fiber, bring water to boil, and **simmer (190°) for one hour.**
- Remove fiber, spin out excess water, wash and rinse.

To reuse, dissolve additional 2 % in hot water and repeat directions.

***Afterbath: simmer fiber 5 minutes in 2 % WOG solution.**

Disposal: pour in weak solution on ground away from gardens, septic tanks and children’s play areas.

***AMMONIA AFTERBATH** (*Changes pH from acid to alkaline, which sometimes changes the color, such as turning cochineal from magenta to purple. Hue tends to move toward blue on color wheel.*)

- Add ½ cup of ammonia to bowl or tub of hottest tap water, putting cap back on bottle immediately. Ammonia loses strength by evaporation when left open.)
- Add warm, wetted, dyed fiber, stir it around and take it out. (If the color doesn’t change right away, add more ammonia or open a new bottle. Dump solution down drain. Wash with soap and water, rinse.)