



## Natural Dyeing : Preparing Plants for Dyeing

### Description

I mentioned in my previous articles that fabric needs to be cleaned or "scoured" in order for it to take up the dye effectively. I also mentioned that after the fabric is scoured it needs to be mordanted, which will increase the light & wash fastness of the dyes. Once your fabric has gone through both of these steps you can start to think about preparing your dyes. If you are not ready to move on to dyeing at this point your fabric can be rinsed, dried and stored until you are ready to begin.

When you first start out try to work with what you have, if you think this is something that will become a hobby then you can begin investing in proper tools and equipment. But for now, I recommend using or getting your hands on an old pot that is not used for cooking.



A collection of dye material from Kathrynâs natural dye workshop

You can purchase dye powders from most dye supply stores which have been processed into powder form and are ready to use. Alternatively, you can use waste material from your kitchens or foraged dye material from your garden or neighbourhood. Basically, you want to gather a generous amount

of whatever you have chosen to use whether that is leaves, tree bark, branches, roots or kitchen waste. It is hard to tell you exactly what type of quantities to use with foraged material as each plant will be different. You will need to experiment to judge for yourself the right amount for the required depth of shade. Some dyers like strong intense colours while others enjoy the soothing palette of softer shades. As a general guide, you want to use the same amount of dyestuff as the weight of the fibre you are dyeing. So for example, if you are dyeing 100g fibre then you would use 100g of dyestuff to start. If you want more intense colours you could experiment with adding more dye material to the dye pot. I always fill my pots 3/4 with water & I always recommend testing on small swatches of fabric before committing to larger pieces or garments. Once you start experimenting you will start to learn how much to use in order to achieve the depth of shade that appeals to you, this is different for everyone.



Kathryn's freshly painted dye studio which does not look like this now!

In terms of extracting the dye, most plant parts need to be simmered for at least 1-2 hours to start realising the dye. If you have the time I would recommend letting the dye material soak in the dye pot for a day or two before you start simmering but this is not always necessary and is only a

suggestion. Once you are satisfied with the strength of dye in the pot you can strain out the plant matter & submerge your fabric. Once I add my fabric, I like to keep the heat at a very low simmer for at least another 30 minutes to an hour or longer for darker shades.



Part of the beauty of natural dyeing is the process, just like cooking everyone

has there own way of creating a delicious meal. There are many ways to get to the same result & I encourage you to start experimenting & find what works for you. As always I would love to hear your thoughts, questions, comments or concerns x

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2. TUTORIALS

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