

Natural Dyeing: Homemade Modifier Recipe

Description



In the last article, I spoke about expanding your colour palette by using modifiers to change the colours of natural dyes. One modifier that I am particularly fond of is Iron. Often described as saddening or dulling colours, it can be used to darker tones, changing yellow to green, beige to grey and pinks or reds to purple or mauves. It can be incredibly exciting to increase the colours available to you by experimenting with modifiers. Iron water can be made easily using some rusty nails and vinegar making it a fun and inexpensive project to try at home. One thing to note is that iron is tough on delicate protein fibres, such as wool or silk, making it better suited to plant fibres, like linen or cotton. You only need to dip your pieces into the iron bath and remove them quickly to see a change in the colour of your dye. If you leave your fabric it in the iron for long periods of time it will weaken the fibre structure, damaging the fabric & making it brittle to the touch.

As iron is a heavy metal it can be used safely in small quantities but it is harmful if ingested and should be handled with care by wearing a mask and gloves. I strongly recommend having designated iron tools such as a bucket, wooden spoon, thongs and a large basin or bowl. If you do your dyeing in your kitchen make sure to keep anything that comes in contact with iron separate from any kitchen or cookware and always wipe down your surfaces or anything that comes in contact with the iron.



Materials

Glass Jar
Vinegar
Water
Rusty Nails or rusty bits of metal (wire wool works well).
Non-reactive container, large enough to hold your linen.
Dyed linen to modify
Some patience.

HOMEMADE IRON WATER
1. Place a handful of rusty nails or rusty bits of metal in a jar (wire wool works well).
2. Add 4 tbsp vinegar: 8 tablespoons water.
3. Leave uncovered for at least 1 week, longer if possible.
4. Once the solution turns rusty orange colour it is ready to use.

TO MAKE A IRON BATH
1. Find a non-reactive metal bucket or container large enough to fit the linen to be modified.
2. Using the above mixture, strain equal parts of the iron solution to equal parts water into a bucket.
3. Add the dyed, rinsed and pre-wetted linen to the iron water.
4. Leave for 1 minute for gentle change in colour, longer for stronger colours.
5. When you see the colour change you like, remove & wash with PH neutral soap & eco-friendly fabric softener.

STORING & DISPOSING
Iron can be stored & reused until it no longer has an effect on colour. Store in glass containers labelled cleary & keep out of reach of children or pets. Small amounts of iron water can be diluted & disposed of safely down the drain. To be extra safe, add one tsp of washing soda, soda crystals or sodium bicarbonate to the diluted solution. This will neutralise the liquid allowing you to safely dispose of down the drain or in your garden.

CATEGORY

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2. TUTORIALS

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