

Making Natural Dyes From Plants

A great source for natural dyes can be found right in your own back yard! Roots, nuts and flowers are just a few common natural ways to get many colors. Yellow, orange, blue, red, green, brown and gray are available. *Go ahead, experiment!*

Gathering plant material for dyeing:

Blossoms should be in full bloom, berries ripe and nuts mature.

To make the dye solution:

Chop plant material into small pieces and place in a pot. Double the amount of water to plant material. Bring to a boil, then simmer for about an hour. Strain. Now you can add your fabric to be dyed. For a stronger shade, allow material to soak in the dye overnight.



Getting the fabric ready for the dye bath:

You will have to soak the fabric in a color fixative before the dye process. This will make the color set in the fabric.

Color Fixative:

Salt Fixative (for berry dyes) 1/2 cup salt to 8 cups cold water

Plant Fixatives (for plant dyes) 4 parts cold water to 1 part vinegar

Add fabric to the fixative and simmer for an hour. Rinse the material and squeeze out excess. Rinse in cool water until water runs clear.

Dye Bath:

- Place wet fabric in dye bath. Simmer together until desired color is obtained.
- The color of the fabric will be lighter when dry.
- Note that all dyed fabric should be laundered in cold water, separately.
- Muslin, cotton and wool work best for natural dyes and the lighter the fabric in color, the better. White or pastel colors work the best.

A list of plant material available for dyes

<p>Orange: Sassafras (leaves)</p> <p>Brown: Sumac (leaves) Walnut (hulls) Tea Bags (light brown) Juniper berries Coffee grinds</p> <p>Pink: Strawberries Cherries</p> <p>Red: Dandelion (root) Beets Rose (hips) Red onion (skins) Chokecherries Madder Raspberries</p>	<p>Green: Spinach leaves Black- Eyed Susans Grass Nettle Plantain Roots Lily of the Valley (leaves) (light green)</p> <p>Yellow: Onion (skins) Marigold (blossoms) Willow (leaves) Queen Anne's Lace Burdock Celery (leaves) Golden Rod (flowers) Sumac (bark) Weld (bright yellow) Cameleon plant (golden)</p>	<p>Blue-Purple: Red cabbage Elderberries Grapes Blueberries Cherry (roots) Japanese indigo (deep blue) Red Cedar Root (purple)</p> <p>Gray - Black: Iris (roots) Sumac (leaves)</p> <p>Red - Purple: Pokeweed (berries) Red Cedar (root)</p> <p>Peach: Broom Flower</p> 
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NOTE: Its best to use an old pot for dyeing and wear gloves when handling the fabric that has been dyed. It will stain your hands. Its also important to note, some plant dyes may be toxic, check with the Poison Control Center if unsure.

Making Recycled Paper

Supplies

- Two and a half single pages from a newspaper
- A whole section of a newspaper
- A blender
- Five cups of water
- A big square pan that is at least 3 inches deep
- A piece of window screen that fits inside the pan
- A measuring cup
- A flat piece of wood the size of the newspaper's front page

Directions

1. Tear two and half single pages from a newspaper into tiny pieces.
2. Drop the pieces into the blender.
3. Pour 5 cups of water into the blender. Using the right amount of water is important. Not enough water can burn out the motor of the blender; too much water will not give you quality paper.
4. Cover the blender, turn on for a few seconds, or until the paper is turned into pulp.
5. Pour about 1 inch of water into the pan.
6. Pour the blended paper (pulp) into a measuring cup.
7. Put the screen into the pan.
8. Pour 1 cup of blended paper (pulp) over the screen
9. Spread the pulp evenly in the water with your fingers.
10. Lift the screen and let the water drain.
11. Open the newspaper section to the middle.
12. Place the screen with pulp on it in the newspaper.
13. Close the newspaper.
14. Carefully flip the newspaper section so the screen is on top of the pulp. This step is important.
15. Place the board on top of the newspaper and press to squeeze out excess water.
16. Open the newspaper and take out the screen. Leave the newspaper open and let the pulp dry for at least 24 hours.
17. The next day, check to make sure pulp paper is dry. If it is, carefully peel it off the newspaper.
18. Now you can use it to write on!

Use the paper to make a card to go with your recycled gift.

