



Natural Dyeing

Before synthetic dyes, natural materials such as plants, trees and vegetables were used to colour materials. There are lots of different recipes out there for different fabrics and plant materials. This guide will help you get started and you can experiment with your own colours and materials!



Try making your own colourful clothes and accessories by using natural materials such as vegetables, fruit and spices as dye.

This activity is best done with an adult as requires chopping. This can be a messy activity!

What you'll need

- Natural undyed fabric e.g. cotton, silk, wool, linen (wool usually works the best)
- Plant material e.g. vegetables, fruit, spices (see the colour chart below)
- Large stockpot with a lid (not one used for cooking)
- Wooden spoon (not one used for cooking)
- Large plastic bucket
- Rubber gloves
- Scissors or knife
- Mordant* (optional)

We would love to see your natural dyeing creations!

Share your photos with us on Instagram or twitter /cityoftreesmcr

*Mordants

Mordants help to absorb the colour into your fabric. You don't have to use mordants, but if you don't the colours will wash out! Some popular mordants to use are:

- Alum
- Tin
- Chrome
- Iron



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What to do/instructions:

1. Wash your fabric thoroughly.
2. If you are using mordant*, dissolve it in a bowl of water, then add the fabric while it is still wet. Make sure you are in a well-ventilated room and always wear gloves.
3. To make the dye, chop up your natural material using scissors or knife and place in a large stockpot with cold water. Check out what you can use for colours on the next page.

TOP TIP - It's best to use freshly picked materials to get a nice bright colour!

4. Gently heat up the natural material until the colour is released. If you are using powders such as spices make sure it is all dissolved before putting your fabric in or if you have large items like twigs or bark remove them before putting your fabric in.
5. Take the stockpot off the heat and leave the fabric in the stockpot, stirring gently, until the colour is absorbed into the fabric.
6. Once you have the shade you want, put on rubber gloves, remove and squeeze the fabric to remove any excess liquid.
7. Dry your fabric on an airer (protect the floor from and drips that may stain it) and then your naturally dyed fabric is ready to use as you please!

Fun ideas

Why not try experimenting with tie dyeing? All you need is lots of elastic bands to tie your fabric in different patterns!

If you don't have any fabric to dye you can make your own watercolour paint by following the above instructions!

Natural Dyeing Colour Chart:

