

These are the dyes I have done.. I have used them on wool only. I have only used alum as a mordant

My 1st experiment was using grape leaves to get a nice yellow. I lived on a vineyard and leaves are not hard to find. I simmered the leaves in a large stainless steel pot (My dyepot) for an hour. I took the leaves out and then simmered the wool for an hour. I lifted the wool out and disappointed with the pale yellow colour, I tossed it back in the dye for another hour. I lifted the wool out and had the same colour. Did A little more reading and decided to try ammonia on the wool. It instantly turned into a bright school bus/canary yellow with is lightfast and colour fast. I test my wool for lightfastness by putting a 6-12 inch strip of the spun yarn into a south facing window for 3-6 months and then check it back against the rest of the skein. I used Dorset wool on this one.

My 2nd experiment was wanting the lovely colour of beets. I swear everyone must have thought this at least once. I did this on white wool, Coopsworth I think. I diced the beets up and simmered them. I then added alum and the wool. and simmered and simmered and simmered.. nothing.. the wool would not take on any colour. I took it out to the compost pile and was going to dump it and decided it was too hot yet and intending to go back to it later.. I promptly forgot... 2-3 weeks later.. I remembered (it was moms compost pile.. not mine) where my pot was and after the initial "EWwwwwwwwwwwww".. and as i was dumping it out. There was only mildew on the top.. the wool was fine. I washed the wool in Palmolive (the only thing I was my wools in) and it was a very nice peachy-orange-red colour, which spun up very nicely and was a violet/peach colour.

Avacado green - I was making Blue Elderberry jelly and had all the pulp and stems and leaves left (WARNING - THE LEAVES, STEMS and SEEDS are TOXIC!!!)...someone asked if I would use the pulp for

making a purple dye and I said.. I had no clue and lets try it. In the 1st 3 mins, I discovered that you CANNOT DO THIS IN YOUR KITCHEN!! The fumes are ugly and incredible. I had heated all the stuff up with alum and a bit of salt. I immediately took it outside and was going to dump it in the blackberries when it cooled and forgot about it for 3 weeks. As bas as this sounds, there are many dyes that are cold fermented. This was just an accidental fermentation. After 3 weeks and I was looking for my dyepot, I rememebred where it was.. opened it up and dicovered a VERY light pink wool (this was on white Jacob wool).. as with the yellow grapeleaf, I thought that perhaps using ammonia, would intensify the colour. I was highly suprised when it turned from light cotton candy pink to a beautiful colourfast and washfast avacado/forest green.

Another yellow I made was from Goldenrod which grows wild all over the area here. Harvest the tops, simmer in water and then strain and then add your dyestuff. No mordant was required. I highly suspect you can get the same intensity of green if you use copper for a mordant.

Woad - I have tried woad in a cold water fermentation. It was some success, but I was also in the middle of moving from Oregon to Canada and I didnt do as well by it as I ought to have. Your dyestuff wont turn colour in the dyebath, it is when it is exposed to air and light that it will turn blue (or pink depending on which you tried). This is paintable on the body, the Celts/Picts were reknown for it. This and henna would be the only ones I would actually try on the skin.

That is the end of my experiments. I am involved in the SCA and have studied traditional dyes from Scotland/Celtic regions and these are my notes I took around 1996. I appologize if they are a little vauge.

Alder - Bark (rich in tannin) Black colour - soak bark 2 days, boil

24 hrs, add iron

Bearberry - Leaves - violetgrey. Leaves are gathered at flowering time (mid-June) . Boil 30 mins, strain, add alum, keep hot 1 hr (ash grey)

Lady's bedstraw - roots Cardinal/lake red..sun dried roots chopped. Soak 24 hrs. Bring slowly to a boil then simmer until a good red colour. Strain. Cool slightly. Alum cover roots again with water and bring to a slow boil. Will continue to get red then brown appears.

Horse chestnut- Cinnimon colour- green husks in September. Soak 24 hrs. Boil with or without alum.

Dock- this is a one dye bath - ripe seed heads

Amber/Apricot - boil 2 hrs

Carmel - boil 2 + hrs

Dull red-

Garnet brown -

Ox Blood Red - the last 3 colours are 8 hrs to 48 hrs

Elderberry - Hot dye - very ripe berries= deep violet

2 days in water with ferrous sulphate and vinegar

Boil until very dark , add alum and yarn,. Soak 2 days, very sensitive to pH changes

Cold dye - oriental blue - ripe berries crushed and soaked in vinegar 2 days, Alum and yarn, soak without heat for 12 hrs. At this point red, Rise with ammonia, red turns to blue

Pineappleweed - very good signal yellow, Flower tops picked mid-summer. Boil 1 hr. Alum yarn overnight, boil longer, greeny-yellow shade

Rhubarb - clean and chop roots, put into glass conatiner, just cover

with water. 1 TB ammonia. will turn red. leave in a sunny place several hrs. Alum yarn. Cold 4 hrs = grey/orange... boil= with extra ammonia and hot bath until Lake Red, for Coral ash, add tin

Lichens - I have a whole whack of lichen recipes. I am hesitant at posting them as many of the lichens can take 100's of years to grow and many are being damaged by pollution.

Madder - Roots - beneath outer woody root bark. young roots = terra cotta. 7 yr old roots = purplish red dye. Ranges from pink, red, orange, brown, lilac and purple with the use of garancine(?)
Paprika colour = dried roots 3 summers old. whole and chopped. heat slowly and boil 4 hrs. Alum, keep hot 12 hrs
Tomato colour = remove yarn at paprika stage, boil roots vigorously 2 more hours, cool liquid and put yarn back in the dyebath, simmer 6 more hours. Strong clear colour

Woad - bi-annual seeds the second year . can be a HIDEIOUS WEED, some states it is illegal to grow. likes deep rich soil. use 1st year leaves. possible to get 4 crops a year from same plant. 1st year leaves gathered, torn up and put into dye container. H2O just below boiling point. Pour over leaves to cover. Soak 20 mins. Squeeze leaves firmly into liquid before discarding. add washing soda. add slowly and stop when it turns green. (was yellow.brown), which 5 mins to get air into it. Heat to 50C, add small amount sodium dithionate; 10 ml to 9 liters of liquid is plenty. leave 30 mins, will turn yellowish. add yarn, no mordant, 10 mins,. if dye turns green add more sodium dithionate. after removing from dyebath, put outside to oxidise, then may have to repeat many times, after (unreadable note), rise and dry.

I have another awesome one I would never try... ok. I might.. for traditional Turkey Red dye.. it never fades after 100's of years. but it involves stale fermented boiled sheep urine as well other

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nasty stuff and it takes 3 weeks to accomplish this...

I have to look up more of my notes if you guys want more.. but this is a start anyway

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