

Natural Dyeing

CRAFT
CLUB



SUPERSLOWWAY

Claire Wellesley-Smith is an artist and writer. She has developed community dye gardens in Yorkshire and Lancashire for projects that explore wellbeing and heritage. This tutorial shows how kitchen waste can be used to add colour to cloth and thread.

Claire has developed a textile garden project with Super Slow Way, looking at the connections between traditional dyeing and printing industries. Super Slow Way is an arts programme in Pennine Lancashire shaped by local communities working alongside artists.



materials

You will need:

- 3 pomegranates
- Alum powder (this is a mordant and will help 'fix' the dye). Buy it from a hand dyeing specialist such as www.wildcolours.co.uk or www.dtcrafts.co.uk
- Undyed wool or silk thread and fabric, washed to remove any dressing
- A saucepan (one to be used just for dyeing and not for cooking – source it from a charity shop. Old aluminium pans are ideal as they also help to fix the colour)
- A sieve
- Gloves



Did you know?
Pomegranate has been used as a dye for thousands of years.

Health and Safety!

Alum can irritate the skin so use gloves when handling it.

Keep a separate pan for your dye experiments do not use it for cooking food.



1. Strip the white pith and fruit from the pomegranate skins (and eat them or cook with them)



2. Add the skins to a saucepan containing enough water to cover them and half a teaspoon of alum powder and leave to soak overnight.

3. The next day, put the pan on the hob and bring it gently to the boil. Simmer for one hour, topping up the water when required.

Now try this:

An easy way to experiment with natural colours is to use what you have in your kitchen. Used coffee grounds, tea bags, onion skins and turmeric powder all make good dyes.



4. Strain the liquid into a container. This is your dye. The skins can be added to your compost.

5. Gently heat the pomegranate dye and add your fabric and threads. The longer you leave the fibres in the pan the stronger the colour will become.

6. Take out the fabric and threads and let them dry. Rinse them out before you use them.

Different dyes for different seasons:

Dyes from the kitchen are a great way to experiment with natural colour during the colder months of the year. In spring and summer you can use fresh plant material.

In the summer months...

Try chamomile flowers, nettle tops, sunflower heads, violas and marigolds, using the same process

Heading into autumn...

Look out for elderberries, acorns, alder cones and fresh walnuts

When using garden plants to make dyes, check what they are on the Royal Horticultural Society plantfinder website to ensure they are safe to use: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants>

Craft Club is a national campaign that champions craft in schools, galleries, libraries and anywhere else you can bring people together to share craft skills.

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