

THE DYEING PROCESS

There are several methods of dyeing fibre, yarn or fabric and some are discussed in this article.

NATURAL DYES

Before dyeing with natural dyes, it should have a mordant applied which helps to set the colour in the yarn. The most common mordant is Alum but you can also use.

IRON..... which will darken the colours

TIN.....which will brighten the colours

COPPER-SULPHATE..... brings out the greens

These are just some of the other mordants that can be used.

MORDANTING

The yarn should first be soaked in water to wet it all the way through, this makes for an even distribution of the mordant.

Then a large pot is filled with enough water to accommodate the yarn easily. The mordant is then added and stirred well to dissolve it into the water.

The wetted yarn is now added to the pot and it is brought up to simmering point.

The pot should be kept at a simmer for 1 hour.

The pot must not be allowed to boil or stirred quickly or the yarn will felt together.

The pot is then removed from the heat and allowed to cool.

Remove the yarn and squeeze out excess liquid, the yarn is now ready for the dyeing process.

DYEING WITH NATURAL DYES

Natural dyes can be as simple as things you find in the food cupboard such as Tea...Coffee...Turmeric etc.

Other natural dyes are found in plants, just a few are

INDIGO...gives a blue Madder...gives a red

BARK....BRACKEN....WALNUTS to name just a few

Almost any plant can produce colour from the leaves, flowers or roots.

Before these plants can be used for dyeing they need to be chopped small and soaked for a good length of time to extract the most colour from them.

Before adding the yarn to the dye pot the plant material can be put into a muslin bag to protect the yarn from becoming entangled with it. This is particularly important if you dye wool fleece before it is spun.



Now the yarn can be added to the pot and brought to a simmer.

The simmering time depends on the colour required, once the colour has been achieved if there is any colour left in the dye pot more yarn can be added to use it up.

This colour is called the exhaust and will produce a much lighter shade of the colour.



Here are some samples of colours achieved with natural dyes.

ACID DYES

Acid dyes are commercially produced dyes usually in powder form and are very easy to use and give a consistent and permanent result.

The yarn for acid dyeing doesn't usually need a mordant as a binder is added during the production of the dye powder which makes it permanent and lightfast.

The yarn for this type of dyeing is usually soaked in water to which a small amount of white vinegar has been added.

The powdered dye is added to the dyebath and mixed well before the yarn is added.

The dye pot is then brought to a simmer for about half an hour or until the depth of colour required is reached.

The yarn is then removed from the dye pot and rinsed thoroughly in cool water to remove any excess dye from it, the water should run clean and then it can be dried and is ready for use.

If there is any colour left in the dye pot more yarn can be added and simmered to use it up.

The dye pot will be almost clear when all the colour has been used.

The acid dyes when mixed can be painted on to a skein of yarn, wrapped in cling film and put in a steamer for 30 minutes. It is then rinsed in the same way until the water runs clear.

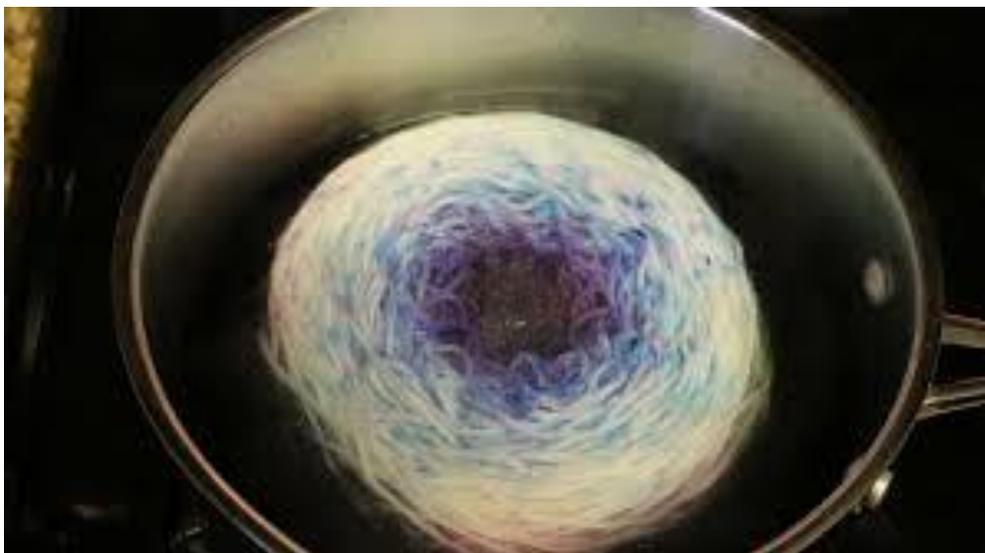
It is also possible to put your painted yarn in a plastic bag and microwave it for a few minutes before cooling and rinsing as before.



Yarn in the dye bath



Yarn being painted before steaming



Dye has been injected into the middle of this ball of yarn and allowed to seep through to give variegated colour.



Samples of dyed yarn

