

Natural Dyeing with Herbs and Foods

The natural dyeing practice is a beautiful way to share the gifts of nourishing herbs and foods with your whole family and to gain a deeper understanding of the plants you love. Here's how to do it.

Supplies you'll need...

- Cloth made from natural materials
- A large pot
- Salt, vinegar, or baking soda (choose one)
- Water
- Rubber bands
- Foods and herbs to dye with and a few pots to prepare them with, if you need to soften them first (see below)

Preparing your Fabric

- 1 To make your dye colorfast, you will need to simmer your clothes in a mordant mixture before dyeing. To do this, fill your large, empty pot with either:
 - 4 parts water to 1 part salt or
 - 4 parts water to 1 part vinegar or
 - 2 cups baking soda to 1 gallon of water
- 2 Choose only one of the above options. Now add in all of the natural cloth you wish to dye.
- 3 Simmer together for about an hour. Turn off the heat and allow the cloth to continue to soak overnight.
- 4 Ring out the material in the morning... and it's ready to color! You can do this in one of two ways (or a combination of both).

Adding color by tie-dyeing

- 1 Place your chosen plant material in a pot with just enough water to cover and let it simmer with a lid on, until the water has taken on some of the plant color. Keep an eye on the water to make sure it does not evaporate completely. If it is looking a little low, add a small amount of water.
- 2 Strain and reserve both the plant and the liquid.
- 3 Tie pieces of your cloth with a rubber band around areas of your fabric and then dip it into

the liquid. This will create a two-tone effect (the cloth under the rubber band will remain white, while the parts around it will absorb the color. Try twisting and folding the cloth before securing with a rubber band for more interesting effects.

- 4 You can also paint on the liquid with your fingers, paintbrush or twig.
- 5 Allow the fabric to dry and then remove the rubber bands and admire your design!

Adding color by pounding it into the cloth

- 1 Lay out the wet, pre-treated material onto a table covered with plastic. (If you plan on doing two sides of your material, such as a t-shirt, be sure to slip a piece of cardboard between the layers, so that the dye won't seep through to the other side while you are working on the first. Flip the shirt over to dye the second side.)
- 2 Line up all of your flowers, leaves, and powdered herbs. Roots, barks, and other tough plant material will need to be pre-cooked by simmering in boiling water until they soften (see directions for preparing plant material for tie-dyeing).
- 3 Apply one or even a combination of herbs to the cloth material.
- 4 Now use your hands, hammers, smooth stones, smooth branches or even feet to crush the plant material into the cloth. Repeat the process with each of your herbs.
- 5 You want to really work the plant matter deep into the fibers. Smear it, pound it, chop it, juice it, crush it, and splash it! Use your creativity to get the plant to release its pigment.
- 6 That's it! You've done it! Now just allow the dyed material to air dry right on the table.
- 7 When dry, rinse in warm water to remove any plant material and then air dry again. Your herbal creations are now ready to wear!