

# Making Natural Dyes from Plants

## What You Need:

- Plant material for your selected color (see color chart below)\*
- Choice of cloth or fabric - light colors and natural cloth material dyes the best
- Dye pot – old cooking pots work best. **You will not be able to use this pot for cooking after using it for dyeing.**
- Rubber gloves
- Fixative – salt or vinegar (depending on dye color material –plant or berry)

**NOTE: READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE YOU START!!**

**Selecting and gathering plant materials to make dye:** When selecting plant materials to make dye, select materials that are fully matured to obtain the fullest color. Berries should be very ripe (not withered) and flowers should be in full bloom and fresh.

**How to make the dye solution:** Chop up the plant material into small pieces (3/4 inch or smaller) and put them in a large pot. Add water twice the amount of the plant material to the pot. Bring mixture to a boil and simmer for one hour. Strain out plant material. Now your dye bath is ready.

**Preparing cloth for dye bath:** You must soak your selected cloth in a color fixative bath for one hour prior to the dye bath process. To save time, you can carry out this step while you are making your dye solution. This step will prepare the cloth/fabric to absorb the color during the dye bath process in the next step. Use the following fixative ingredients below based on the plant material you are planning to use in your dye.

- *For berry based dyes – mix ½ cup salt with 8 cups cold water*
- *For plant based dyes – mix 1 part vinegar with 4 parts cold water*

Place cloth in fixative bath. Bring bath to a simmer for one hour. This will allow the cloth to fully absorb the color fixative. Wring out all fixative from cloth and rinse in cool water.

**Dye bath process:** Place the wet cloth into the prepared dye bath. Simmer dye bath until you reach your desired color (*Note: your dry cloth color will be lighter than the wet cloth color so make sure to go a couple shades darker to attain your*

*intended DRY color*). Using your rubber gloves, remove and wring out all dye bath from cloth and hang dry.

**This type of dye is not colorfast in warm water. Launder all dyed cloth separately from other clothing and wash in cold water only.**

**Cloth Note:** Make sure to select a cloth made of natural fibers such as wool or cotton- synthetic materials do not hold dye very well. Also try to select pieces that are lighter in color to start. The lighter the beginning color the brighter your dye color will show.

|                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Orange</b>      | <b>Onion Skins</b>       |
|                    | <b>Lilac Twigs</b>       |
|                    | <b>Carrot Roots</b>      |
| <b>Brown</b>       | <b>Walnut Hulls</b>      |
|                    | <b>Coffee Grounds</b>    |
|                    | <b>Acorns</b>            |
| <b>Pink</b>        | <b>Cherries</b>          |
|                    | <b>Strawberries</b>      |
|                    | <b>Raspberries (red)</b> |
| <b>Blue-Purple</b> | <b>Red Cabbage</b>       |
|                    | <b>Blueberries</b>       |
|                    | <b>Elderberries</b>      |
| <b>Red</b>         | <b>Red Beets</b>         |
|                    | <b>Chokecherries</b>     |
|                    | <b>Rose Hips</b>         |
| <b>Green</b>       | <b>Spinach Leaves</b>    |
|                    | <b>Grass</b>             |
|                    | <b>Artichokes</b>        |
| <b>Yellow</b>      | <b>Dandelion Flowers</b> |
|                    | <b>Marigold Flowers</b>  |
|                    | <b>Bay Leaves</b>        |

**\*You can easily find these materials outdoors or at supermarkets, but you are not limited to only using those listed above. You can find many more plant dye material ideas online.**