

Dying to Dye

Children and adults often have favourite items of clothes e.g. that yellow raincoat, a blue T shirt etc.

Today we will learn that we can change the colour (dye) of material using plants. Note that it is generally easier to dye animal fibres like wool and silk than plant-based fibres like cotton or linen.



You need

- Strips of white cotton or linen, or yarns of wool
- Plant material that will supply dye
- Pot that can be heated on the stove

What to do

1. In a pot, cover the plant materials with water and then simmer them for until the water is coloured. Remove the plant material
2. Treat the material to be dyed by placing in the pot and simmering for 30 to 60 minutes, turning the material gently. Stir and check the colour every 10 minutes or so. Rinse dyed materials with progressively cooler water and hang them to dry.

Plant materials that can be used include

- Onion skins
- Turmeric powder
- Walnut husks
- Red cabbage

Extra experiments

If you add vinegar or baking soda to the material being dyed, you can get different colours from the same plant dye.

Before you start, I suggest you watch

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUuK2Xkz3oA>

note

- she uses lots of wool yarn, it is expensive, you only need one or two short lengths. You can use cotton
- the reference to mordant – it is a chemical that fixes the dye so it doesn't wash out. There is no need to use mordants at this level. The point is to see that we can colour things using plant material.