

Textile Indie's Natural Dyeing Glossary

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Absorbency - The amount a fiber is able to absorb or suck up and retain a liquid.

Absorption - To absorb liquid. A fiber taking on a liquid.

Acid - The level of pH on the high side of the pH scale.

Additive - Something added to a mordant to assist the mordant to adhere to the surface of a fiber.

Adjective dye - A dye that requires the use of a mordant in order for the dye to stick to the fiber surface.

Alkaline - Has a pH of 7 or higher. Has the properties of an alkali, or contains alkali.

Alum - A mineral salt used to mordant fiber.

Auxiliary - An additional element added to a mordant bath to assist in the mordanting process.

Bark - The outer layer on the branches of trees and bushes. Some barks can be used as a dye source.

Base - Has a pH of 7 or higher. This term seems to be interchangeable with the term alkaline.

Bath ratio - The amount of materials used depending on the weight of the fiber being dyed.

Bleeding - When a color moves from one location on a fiber and spreads out from there.

Bundle dyeing - Dyeing fabric by laying organic materials on the material when it is laid flat and then rolling it up, tying it into a bundle and steaming it to extract the colors onto the fabric.

Cellulose fibers - A fiber that comes from a plant. Examples: cotton, linen.

Chemical - A man made product used to apply color to the surface of fabric and yarns.

Cochineal - A bug sourced from South America. This bug is collected and used to create a brilliant pink dye.

Colorant - Used to describe the pigment that comes from dye stuff.

Color shifting -

Cool dyeing - A dyeing process using cool water.

Crocking - When a color rubs off of a dyed material onto hands or other surface.

Dip - To gently lower fiber, fabric or yarn into a dye bath.

Dye concentrate - A dye that is in powder or liquid form that has a high concentration of color and can be diluted to get different shades.

Dye extract - A natural color that has been processed so that it turns to a powder and is used in powdered form.

Dye plant - A plant that can be used to create natural dye.

Dyes - Substance used to color the surface of another object, like fiber yarn or fabric.

Dye stuff - Something that can be used as a natural dye. This includes things like leaves, nuts, flowers, bark, roots, bugs (like cochineal)

Exhaust bath - Using a mordant bath or dye bath multiple times to absorb all of the possible mordant or remaining dye in the pot.

Extracting - Manipulating the dye stuff to remove as much color as possible to apply to fiber.

Flowers - The colorful portion of a plant. Used as a potential dye source.

Fugitive - A natural dye that quickly fades. A color that is not lightfast or washfast.

Heat dyeing - A dyeing method using heat to extract the dye color and fix that color to fiber.

Husks - The outer portions of a nut or seed that has the potential for a dye.

Indigo - A plant from which a deep navy blue dye can be produced.

Iron - A possible mordant or binder to assist in natural dyes adhering to a fibers surface.

Layering -

Leaves - The leaves from a flower, bush or tree used to extract dye color.

Lightfastness - A colors resistance to fading.

Mellowing - When a naturally dyed fiber begins to slightly fade and the initial brilliance of a color slightly lessens.

Mordant - A substance used to help dye bind to the surface of a fiber. Immersing fiber into a mordant bath before dyeing is used to create durable and longer lasting natural colors.

Mordanting - A process of heating a mordant in water and adding fiber. The fiber is stirred in the mordant bath for a period of time at a high heat and then allowed to cool. This mordanted material then can be dyed with natural dyes.

Nuts - A material that can be used to create a variety of beiges and brown colors. Nuts like acorns, walnuts, chestnuts and others can be used with great results.

Organic materials - A material that has grown from the ground.

Over-reduced vat - Too much reducing agent has been added to the vat.

pH - This is a measurement of the quality of a liquid, like water. A high pH indicates a basicity and a low pH indicates acidity.

Protein fibers - Fibers that come from animals, or from a protein plant, like soybean fiber. Examples: wool, angora, cashmere, silk.

Reducing agent -

Root - The roots of a plant. The roots from some plants are valuable dye sources.

Saddening - When a goes from a vibrant color to a more muted color. Often this is done using iron water to make a brighter color grayer.

Scouring - The process of preparing fiber for the natural dyeing process. This is a step used strip fibers of oils, dirt and other surface grime that would cause it to not take on the color during dyeing.

Skein - Yarn that has been wrapped around something to create a loop of yarn. The loop is then tied to hold the bundles of yarn together and then twisted and wrapped around itself to create a skein.

Solar dyeing - Adding mordanted fiber, dye materials and water to a clear glass jar and allowing it to sit in the sun until color begins to seep from the dye stuff into the fiber. The sun is the heat source for this light heat bath.

Soy milk - A liquid created from soybeans. Soybeans are soaked in water and then blended to create a milky liquid that is infused with the soybean proteins. Used as a plant based mordant in some dyeing processes.

Sustainability - The ability to maintain a certain activity over a long period of time without negatively affecting the surrounding environment or people.

Tannins - A organic chemical compound that is sourced from oak galls and other organic materials and is used to assist fiber to absorb mordants and thus dye more affectively.

Under-reduced vat - Not enough reducing agent has been added to the vat.

Vat dyeing - A dyeing technique, used for indigo, that breaks down organic materials in a combination solution to make the organic material water-soluble and work as a natural dye.

Washfastness - The ability of a dyed fiber to maintain its color after several washings.

Weight of fiber - The weight of the fiber about to be dyed. This weight is used in calculating the amount of product used for a scouring bath, the amount of mordant to use and the amount of dye material to use. Often referred to as WOF.