

Lichen Dye (Step 2)

Art 185LJ May 31, 2024

It's finally time to dye!

Type of dye: Orcein

Colors: Purple, Pink (+ acid)

Textiles: Un-mordanted Wool, Silk, and Cotton. We will also try some mordanted wool to see if there is a difference.

Additives and Modifiers: Salt for color fastness, Acid (Vinegar/Lemon/Citric Acid etc.) to modify the color.

Process

WARNING!! Ammonia irritates the eyes and skin. Keep the jar away from you when opening the lid and don't let the fumes from the dye bath get in your face.

1. In class we will use jars to dye. At home you can put the dye liquid and water in a pot.
2. Pour some of concentrated dye liquid into an empty glass jar, avoid getting any of the actual lichen into the jar. The more dye liquid you use, the stronger the color. Add water.
3. *Karen Casselman recommends mixing in normal salt, half the volume of the amount of concentrated dye liquid.
4. Put textile samples in the jar/pot. Do not crowd the jar/pot.
5. Heat up to 180°f, then keep it at around 160°f for an hour or so.
6. Let textiles cool down in the bath. Cassleman* suggest waiting overnight then heat up again, then let cool down again leaving the textiles in the bath for another 24 hours.
7. Make an afterbath with some acid and shift the color towards pink on some, not all, of your samples. (fun fact, Litmus paper, used to check for pH levels, was first made from lichens, and the name 'litmus' might stem from old Norse for "a moss that dyes" – litmosi, although we now know lichens are not moss) You can also try iron and alkaline.
8. Remove from the dye bath. For improved color fastness wait 24 hours before rinsing.

For information about dyeing with lichens and the history of lichen dyes see links on class homepage.

*Karen Casselman, Lichen Dyes the New Source Book