



Natural Dyes

Yellow

The oldest natural yellow dye used by humans, ochre, came directly from the earth and was dug from beds or pockets by Aboriginal peoples to create art. Later, ancient Egyptians used another mineral, orpiment, to achieve a brighter tone than ochre on linen to symbolize the radiance of the sun. In ancient China, yellow held

special significance as the emperor's auspicious color and nobility who wore yellow were afforded certain privileges and status.

Today, natural yellow dye can be achieved through many plant, animal and mineral materials.

All of the items showcased at right can be used to achieve a yellow dye naturally.



What makes yellow?

Piercing dark canary, creamy pale lemon, clear greenish-yellow and all the subtle shades in between can be achieved with these natural ingredients.



Eucalyptus
(Blue gum)



Annatto seeds



Lead



Yarrow



Saw-wort flowers



Bay leaves

Did You Know?

Yellow is a primary color and acts as a mother color from which other colors can be derived by mixing.



Recipe

Old Fustic dye

Old Fustic dye is made from heartwood of *Maclura tinctoria*, a medium to large tree of the mulberry family originally found in the forests of Brazil and the West Indies. It was discovered between the years 1600 to 1850 to be an easy, cheap and reliable source of dye.

Pour boiling water over 50 grams of fustic wood chips in a large pan. Leave to steep overnight. The next day, simmer the chips in the water for about an hour, then cool the dye bath. Pour the contents of the saucepan through a sieve. (If you want to re-use the chips, spread them out to dry for later and store them only when they are entirely dry.)

Add 100 grams of natural animal fiber (pre-mordanted with alum) to the dye bath and simmer for 30 minutes. Remove. If you wish to dye other items a lighter yellow, use the dye bath again.

Old fustic has good light fastness.

Note: Young fustic dye is made from the Smoke tree, a tree related to cashews and sumacs. Young fustic is a less permanent dye.

Dyeing terminology

Natural dyes

are dyes derived from animals, roots, berries, wood, minerals, fungi and lichens.

Synthetic dyes

were originally made from coal-tar byproducts but are now mostly created in the laboratory from chemicals, mainly benzene and its derivatives.



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