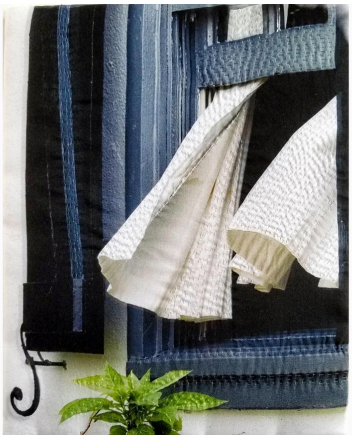






JEANE VOGEL STUDIOS

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Dyeing Fiber with Garden Plants
Seed St. Louis • October 17, 2026
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First, a disclaimer: there are LOTS of tutorials available on natural plant dyeing. Some will be contradictory. All of them will work, some are better than others. These instructions contain the practices from my studio. Experiment to find what works best for you!

These instruction are for protein fiber. Dyeing cotton or linen might be different.

Safety first

- **NEVER use pots, utensils, strainers, thermometers, etc that will ever again come in contact with food. Everything in the dye studio stays with the dye studio**.
- Always wear a dust mask (not a bandana or scarf) when measuring and mixing dry chemicals (alum, soda ash, etc.)
- Always wear gloves when handling or mixing chemicals.
- Avoid working in your kitchen. It's easy to contaminate food surfaces.

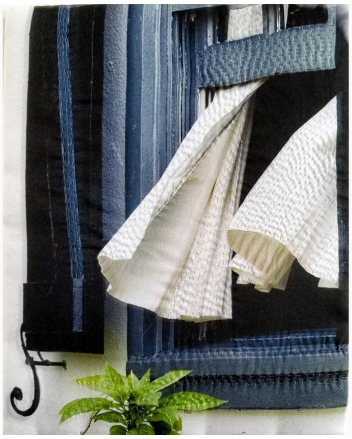
Equipment

- Heat source, like a hot plate. If using outside, make sure the cords are rated for outdoor use.
- Stainless steel or other non-conductive pots. Aluminum and cast iron pots will leach metals that will change the colors of the fiber to be dyed.
- Wooden spoons.
- Kitchen scale that measures in grams
- Gloves
- N75 Dust Mask
- Apron — a plastic darkroom apron is best for messy people (like me!)
- Thermometer
- Good metal sieve, or other ways to filter plant stuff from the dye
- Blender or food processor for Indigo dye bath only

SEED
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Prepare your fiber

All fiber must be prepped for dyeing. Animal protein (wool, silk, alpaca, etc.) and cellulose fiber (cotton, linen, etc.), must be SCOURED and MORDANTED before dyeing.

Scour: basically a scary word for soaking in slightly warm water with a touch of soap (I like Blue Dawn) for 1 -8 hours. Just soak, agitate gently, then rinse in cool water. Squeeze dry, blot with a towel.

Mordant: A mordant is a chemical that helps bond the dye to the fiber. There are natural tannin mordants found in onion skins, indigo leaves, black walnut husks, avocado skins. If you're dying with these, no additional mordant is necessary.

Most plant dyes will need a mordant. Alum (Aluminum Sulfate) is the best and easiest for wool. Use 1-2 tablespoons per 100 grams of fiber. Dissolve alum (using mask and gloves) in enough water to cover your fiber. Heat to 180F and hold for 1 hour. Rinse the fiber.

The fiber (wool skeins) are ready for the dye pot.

Dyeing Japanese Indigo in an Ice Bath

This is the easiest dyeing you will do! This technique works on all natural fiber (protein and cellulose.) No mask or mordanting needed. All fiber should be scoured.

You will need:

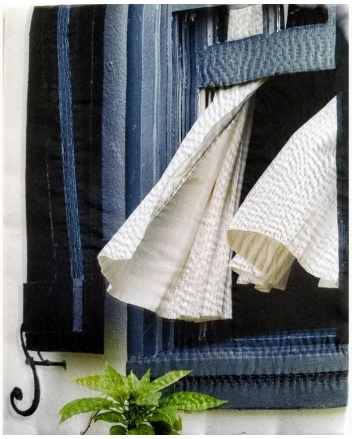
- A blender or food processor (not for food)
- Ice and cold water
- Fresh or dried Japanese indigo leaves
- Strainer
- Pot for dyeing
- Wooden spoon for agitation
- Gloves and apron (indigo dye will stain everything!)

Procedure

- Measure weight of fiber (wof) and leaves. You'll want a ratio of 5:1 indigo to fiber for the darkest color. 1:1 gives you lovely robin's egg blue.
- Add leaves and very cold water (some ice cubes are ok too) and blend until green and bubbly
- Strain into dye pot
- Soak for 20-60 minutes. Can be over dyed again for darker color
- Rinse in cool water.
- Can be overdyed with Marigold for green







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Marigolds

- Collect fresh blooms or use dried
- 1:1 ratio fiber to plant material
- Add flowers to dye pot. Steep for at least 1 hour at 180F.
- DO NOT BOIL
- Strain dye
- Add wet and mordanted animal fiber to dye pot. (If fiber is dry, soak in plain water for a few minutes.
- Bring pot to 180F and hold for 1 hour. Stir gently from time to time
- Remove from heat and steep for up to 24 hours or use immediately. Longer steeping releases more color.
- Rinse in cool water.

Hibiscus

- Collect fresh blooms or use dried
- 2:1 ratio fiber to plant material
- Add flowers to dye pot. Simmer for at least 30 minutes at 180F.
- DO NOT BOIL
- Strain dye
- Add wet and mordanted fiber to dye pot. (If fiber is dry, soak in plain water for a few minutes.
- Bring pot to 180F and hold for 1 hour. Stir gently from time to time
- Remove from heat and steep for up to 24 hours or use immediately. Longer steeping releases more color.
- Rinse in cool water.

There are lots of resources online and at the library for more information. This is just a beginning (and a bit of a rabbit hole!)

botanicalcolor.com
florafiber.com
allnaturaldyeing.com
dharmatrading.com
eugenetextilecenter.com
naturaldyestore.com