FABRIC DYEING USING RED CABBAGE AND TURMERIC

A natural process!
Fabric Dyeing using Red Cabbage & Turmeric

A safe, natural method for you to try!
There are many, many ways to dye fabric using natural sources of dye. We all have products and produce in our kitchens or gardens that we can use - onions, tea, coffee, spinach, rhubarb, spices, etc, and I've achieved some gorgeous (if muted) results using eucalyptus leaves. The aroma of boiling eucalyptus is just delightful!

Today I decided to dye using red cabbage and turmeric. This came about because:
• I had a supply of turmeric in my kitchen pantry
• I had 3/4 of a red cabbage that had been hiding in the fridge for rather longer than planned. I didn't want to waste it, but felt it was 'past its prime' when it came to eating it!

So let's dive in and see exactly how to do this…

Deborah

#1 - A NON-TOXIC APPROACH

I chose to use a method that is completely non-toxic - no chemicals, no mordants to set the colours - because I wanted to see the results without using a mordant.

Delving into a bit of scientific research, I discovered that red cabbage is what is known as a 'substantive' dye that contains a water-soluble pigment called 'anthocyanin'. This means that the pigment can bond to natural fibres without a mordant.
I have always used either **alum (relatively non-toxic)** or **soda ash (highly toxic)** when dyeing, and most commonly I use soda ash, as I generally use Procion MX (chemical) dyes.

#2 - WATCH THE VIDEO TUTORIAL

[Find the video tutorial here](#)

#3 - PREPARING THE RED CABBAGE DYE BATH

- Cut the red cabbage into rough chunks, put them all in a large saucepan, and cover with water
- Bring to the boil, then simmer for one hour

#4 - PREPARING THE FABRIC

- I've used PFD (Prepared for dyeing) cotton fabric - 3 pieces cut in 1 1/2 metre/yard lengths
- Mix boiling water with salt in a bucket at the ratio of 3/4 cup of salt to 4 cups of water
- Plunge the fabric into the salt solution and let it sit until needed

#5 - DYEING THE FABRIC

- When the cabbage is cooked, strain off the liquid and divide between 2 large bowls or containers
- To one bowl, add a heaped teaspoon of **baking soda** - this will turn the fabric a blue/grey shade
- To the other bowl, add a tablespoon of **white vinegar** - this will intensify the pink shade
- Wring out two pieces of fabric and place one in each bowl
- Leave to cure for at least one hour

*See the difference the vinegar and soda ash make!*
#6 - RINSE THE FABRIC

- Rinse each piece of fabric (separately to avoid transference of dye) under running water until the water runs clear
- Set aside to dry
#7 - A WORD OF CAUTION!
Washing these pieces in the washing machine will probably result in considerable loss of colour, at least in my experience

#8 - PREPARING THE TURMERIC DYE BATH
- Mix approximately 1/4 cup powdered turmeric with 4 cups of water, in a saucepan
- Place the pan on the stove and bring to the boil, stirring well to make sure the turmeric is dissolved

#9 - PREPARING AND DYEING THE FABRIC
- Wring out the remaining piece of PFD fabric and place in another basin
- Add 1 tablespoon vinegar
- Pour the turmeric solution over the fabric
• Mix well and set aside to cure for 30 - 60 minutes

#10 - RINSE THE FABRIC

• Rinse the fabric under running water until the water runs clear
• Set aside to dry
#11 - FURTHER RESULTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- After washing in the washing machine, the turmeric dye had minimal loss of colour, with the yellow remaining strong and clear, while the red cabbage dyes lost a LOT of depth of colour when washed in the washing machine
- Given this experience, I would use these fabrics after hand rinsing
- Reserve dyes like this for textile work rather than clothing if you want the colours to remain pure

I hope you enjoyed creating fabric dye safely!

Deborah

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