

How to dye “Beautiful Black” on any natural textile with Natural Dyes

Includes:

Tannin, 1 oz.: Tannin is from tree bark; it helps fix the color.

Iron, 1 oz.: This is the same iron (ferrous sulphate) as in mineral supplements. People need iron to keep the blood red and healthy. It helps fix the color.

Logwood, 1 oz.: This is made from the heartwood of a tropical tree. It is used as a skin and hair dye, as a stain for microscopic studies, and to color steel. It is also a medicinal tea, and is high in anti-oxidants.

You will need:

Two buckets, 5 gallon size. Food grade plastic buckets are often free at the back of any restaurant; wash them out well. To dye 4 oz of textile you need just 2 gallons, twice; so if you have smaller buckets on hand, they will work.

Hot water. Hottest tap water. (About 140 degrees Fahrenheit)

Step 1: Choose and Wet out your fabric

All natural fibres will dye with natural dyes. There is enough dye in this mini-kit to dye black on 4 oz of textile. A medium woman's all cotton t-shirt is usually about 4 oz.

Be sure the textile is all natural as neither spandex nor polyester will take the dye. If you chose these blends, the colour will be a nice dark grey.

Wash the chosen textile. This removes impurities that may interfere with the dye.

Then warm the material up in hot water, to keep it wet while you prepare the dye.

Step 2: “Mordanting” to fix the color, part 1

Half fill one of the buckets with hot tap water. (Two gallons)

Add the *Tannin*; stir to dissolve.

Add the material. Be sure to poke out any air bubbles so the textile is fully immersed in the water, or else you may get uneven color.

Let it sit at least one hour, stirring gently every 10 minutes. (Lift and poke to open out fabric for evenness in color.)

Step 3: Mordanting, part 2

Remove the material.

Add the *Iron* to the water with the *Tannin*; stir to dissolve.

Add the material. It will turn from a beige to a gray. Be sure to poke out all air bubbles. Let it sit at least an hour, stirring gently every 10 minutes.

Step 4: Air

Remove the material and hang it to "air".

Let air about 1 hour.

It should be a nice dark gray.

If it seems light in color, return it to the Tannin-Iron bucket for another hour.

Step 5: Dyeing

Half fill the second bucket with two gallons of hot tap water.

Add the *Logwood* and stir to dissolve.

Add the material; be sure to poke out air bubbles. Let it sit at least an hour, stirring gently every 10 minutes or so.

That's it! Rinse three times in plain water.

Dry in a machine dryer or hang in the shade, out of direct sunlight.

Press, if desired, with a medium hot steam iron.

More fun with the left-over dye:

Pour the contents of the two buckets together. It will save. Use it for shades of grays on any white cloth. If you start with a yellow or gold colored cloth you will get nice soft sage and forest greens. What you see is what you get, so when it is as dark as you like, rinse and dry.

Safely dispose down the drain, or on the garden. The iron is good for the plants, just as it is good for you!

Logwood black is considered one of the most permanent colors ever. It is still used to dye silk for medical sutures.

Kit and instructions by Cheryl Kolander, Senior Master Natural dyer, Aurora Silk.
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