

# Natural Dyes for Easter Eggs



Natural dyeing demonstrations at the living history museum are always a favorite of guests. Each season produces different sources that allow us to create unique colors. Natural dyes or colorants are derived from plants, invertebrates, or minerals. The majority of natural dyes are vegetable dyes from plant sources—roots, berries, bark, leaves, and wood—and other biological sources such as fungi and lichens. The essential process of dyeing has changed little over time, making it a perfect activity to try at home with your family.

Experiment with natural color for coloring eggs! Dyes made from items in the pantry or garden provide soft colors of varying intensity. The process is straightforward, and many dyestuffs may already be on your pantry shelves. Beets, blueberries, chili powder, coffee, red cabbage, spinach, and turmeric are some popular natural egg dye choices, but onion skin provides the most

reliable color for the golden eggs in your Easter basket. Until you become familiar with how it's done, consider starting with just one or two dyestuffs.



### **Instructions**

For eggs that are gold to red-orange in color, use skins from 6-8 yellow onions.

Bring two cups of water to boil in small saucepan, then add the onion skins, pushing them down under the water with a spoon until they stop floating. Reduce heat and simmer for about 30 minutes.

Allow water to cool until just warm and strain out the dyestuff.

Fill a coffee mug or half pint jar about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full, leaving room for 2 tablespoons of white vinegar and an egg.

Allow eggs to steep in the dye for a few hours, removing when you have the color you like. Rinse and dry the egg and rub with a small amount of vegetable oil for a shiny finish.