

Natural Dye for Easter Eggs

We use all sorts of plants to dye wool yarn, many that are found growing at Hale Farm and Village throughout the seasons. For coloring eggs, you can use things from the grocery store, like blueberries, onion skins, and spices. Most make soft colors, while a few can be surprisingly bright. Experiment by mixing colors, or use the procedure below to try making dye from something that is not on our list.

Result can be interesting! Check the jars as the color develops, and you will see bubbles collecting on the surface of the eggs. The vinegar is an acid, and reacts with the calcium carbonate of the eggshell to produce calcium acetate and carbon dioxide gas. The bubbles leave white spots on the egg, and colors may take unevenly, both part of natural dye designs. As you rinse the egg, rub the dark residue away to reveal the pale color beneath.

For the first time you try dyeing eggs with natural color, consider choosing just one dye material as you learn how it's done. Onion skins give the most reliable color for a variety of beautiful golden eggs to add to your basket.



dyestuff	amount	color
onion skins	skins from 6 onions	gold
blueberries	1 cup fresh or frozen	pale blue or grey
turmeric	2 t. in sachet*	yellow
spinach	2 handfuls	pale green
beets	juice from 1 can; 3 slices, chopped	pale purple or pink
chili powder	2 T in sachet*	pale orange
red cabbage	1 c. shredded	pale blue
coffee	1 c. brewed**	light brown

*place amount of spice in center of cotton square; tie with thread to make a dye sachet

**add vinegar to brewed coffee; no additional preparation needed

Supplies needed:

Hard-boiled eggs
 Water
 White vinegar
 Half-pint glass jars with lids
 Small saucepan; spoons for stirring
 Strainer
 Newspaper, paper towels to protect the table
 6" x 6" squares of cotton cloth (for spice sachet)
 Optional: vegetable oil

Procedure:

1. Bring 2 cups water to a rolling boil in a small saucepan
2. Add dye material
3. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 30 minutes
4. Allow to cool to room temperature
5. Strain if needed
6. Fill a half-pint jelly jar or other small container $\frac{3}{4}$ full
7. Add 2 T. white vinegar
8. Place a hard-boiled egg into the dye
9. Cover and refrigerate overnight or until color develops
10. Remove the eggs; rinse and dry
11. Rub a small amount of vegetable oil on shells for shine

This makes just enough dye to cover two eggs each placed a jar or mug. Experiment by mixing colors or using longer or shorter dyeing times. Please follow food safety guidelines for storage of boiled eggs.

Would you like to learn more about the things we make and do at Hale Farm & Village? Write to us: halecrafts@wrhs.org