

Drag Declares Emergency

Fabric Dye from Food Waste



Hi, I'm Kitt, an artist and drag king based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Here are instructions for how to dye natural fabric with food waste, commissioned from amazing artist Katie Pollard!

The instructions introduce a fun & planet-kind activity which offers time for reflection on:

- the ways our crafting can impact the health of the planet.
- the power of LGBTQIA+ communities to make more environmentally thoughtful queer & drag crafts.

We'd love you to share your planet kind drag with Craftspace using the hashtag #EcoDragChallenge.



Fabric Dye from Food Waste

Materials

Choose your fabric. Natural dyes only dye natural materials. This tutorial looks at how to dye plant based fabrics such as linen, cotton or hemp.

Choosing second hand material from charity shops can be a great option. If you are looking to buy new material, opt for organic where possible. This will guarantee that there are no pesticides and harmful chemicals used in the growing and processing of the material.



Hemp plant



Flax plant



Cotton plant

Prepare your fabric

It is important that any equipment used for prepping or dyeing fabric is separate to that you use for cooking. To achieve even, colourfast results, it is recommended that you scour and mordant your fabric prior to dyeing. This means washing your fabric to remove any dirt, natural oils or grease and applying a pre-treatment in order to fix the dye to the fabric.

Scouring process



Weigh your dry fabric and make a note of the weight.

Soak your fabric in cold water for at least 2 hours.

Fill a large pan (around 15 litres) with hot tap water.

Boil some water and pour a small amount of this water into a jug. Measure out 4 teaspoons of washing soda, add this to the jug and stir until all lumps are dissolved.

Add 2 teaspoons of PH neutral washing up liquid (such as Ecover) to the pan, along with the dissolved washing soda and stir. Add the fabric to the pan.

Put the pan on the hob, bring to the boil and heat on a medium heat for around 2 hours stirring regularly. Ensure the fabric is fully submerged.

Rinse thoroughly.

Mordanting process



Ensure your fabric is thoroughly wet before starting this process.

Fill a large pan halfway with hot tap water.

Wearing a dust mask, measure out 5g of aluminium acetate to every 100g of fabric and add this to the pan water and stir.

Add your fabric to the pan and, wearing gloves, squeeze the fabric. Leave to soak in the solution overnight.

Hang your fabric to dry. Leave this for around 4 days (until the vinegar smell has disappeared) and then rinse your fabric to remove any excess mordant.

Choose and prepare your dyestuff

Food waste is a great place to start when experimenting with natural dyes. It's a great feeling to be able to use the things that can't be consumed to make beautiful dye colours!



Both the skins and the stones of an avocado can be used to create dye. The stones give a pale pink, while the skins offer a more rusty orange-pink. Clean the skins or stones and use around 10 stones or 10 full skins per 100g fabric.



White onion skins will produce a bold orange dye, while red onion skins produce purples and browns. Collect the dry outer skins and use 2 big handfuls per 100g fabric for a good strong colour.



Don't throw away your used teabags.. they still have a lot to give! Use around 40 used teabags per 100g fabric. You can also throw in a few new teabags if you need to boost the colour!

Make your dye



Now to make the colour...

Add your chosen dyestuff to a pan which is big enough for your fabric to move around freely.

Add warm water to the pan, add enough water so that when you are dyeing your material it will be completely covered and can easily move around in the liquid.

Heat slowly and simmer the plant material.

Tea and onion skins will take around 30 - 40 minutes. Avocado skins or stones take around 1.5 - 2 hours.

Once you have a good colour, strain out the food waste and return the dye liquid to the pan.

Dye your fabric!



The fun part...

Soak your fabric for at least 2 hours (if not already wet from the mordanting process.)

Add your fabric to the dye ensuring it is all fully submerged. Simmer for around 30-45 minutes (or until you have achieved the desired colour).

Stir the fabric regularly during this time – this helps to prevent blotchiness and gives a more even colour

Turn off the heat and leave your material in the dye until it cools.

Rinse your fabric thoroughly and hang to dry out of direct sunlight.

More about the artist Katie Pollard

Your fabric is now ready! Go forth and make an amazing eco-conscious costume! For more on natural dyes check out [@borrowedcolour](#) on Instagram

#EcoDragChallenge

How to share your fabulous planet-kind drag creations with Craftspace and the world!!!

We invite everyone to share “before and after” / transformation photos and videos of what they’ve made. #EcoDragChallenge @craftspace_

If you’d like Craftspace to share what you’ve made on the website please email takepart@craftspace.co.uk with the heading #EcoDragChallenge.

We are Commoners

For more info on my residency, the Drag Declares Emergency project and Craftspace’s project “We Are Commoners” visit craftspace.co.uk.

Instructions written by Katie Pollard.

Images: Costume images by Art Matters Now, Instruction drawings by Katie Pollard. Elf costume made by Sam Goodrick. Jack’O The Orange costume made by Lady Kitt.

