

Natural Dyes: A Color Library



What you need to bring (please put your name on your supplies)

- Scissors for paper and to cut or snip fabric
- Permanent black marker for listing the mordants and dyes on your color blanket
- Roll of masking tape (partial roll is fine - any width, however, if you wish to mask a line between each color on your color library, then 1/8"-1/4" width tape works well)
- Rubber gloves (Casabella or Playtex-type household gloves that are at least 10-12cm above your wrist) and that withstand hot water. I also like lightweight thermal gloves to wear under the rubber gloves to protect my hands from heat.
- Rubber gloves to use for dyeing in the indigo vat
- A few pair of close fitting disposable gloves
- Apron

Cloth: Besides the color blanket, most of the work will be small in scale in order to develop an extensive body of information.

The cloth needs to be 100% natural: cellulose or silk preferred. No polyester or acrylic, or natural cloth treated with permanent press or protective finishes. Bring silk, bamboo, rayon, cotton, linen, hemp, or any blend of these. Wool is not as successful for printing processes, but can be used.

Bring two pieces of the same cloth that are approximately 1 yard in length. You will make your color library on this cloth. We will make one library with a light indigo blue base and the other with a white base. We will begin the class by dyeing 1-yard light blue in indigo and then hand painting stripes of thickened mordants in one direction. On the second day we will paint stripes of thickened dyes in the other direction making a color grid library. You are welcome to bring additional cloth to make the color library on different cloth.

Bring from home a selection of cloth (and or scarves or yarn) totaling approximately three to five yards, for dye tests. Students are encouraged to experiment with fibers they are most familiar with and that they will most likely use in their own studio practice.

Scour: If your cloth is PFD then wash it in hot water with a natural pH detergent. This can be done in the washing machine.

Scour for cotton (ONLY) do NOT scour hemp or ramie:

If your cloth is not PFD, then simmer the cloth for approximately 30 minutes in a pot of water with 2 tsp soda ash and 1/4 tsp synthrapol or free and clear dish detergent (that is free and clear of any scent) or orvis paste per pound of dry cloth. Make sure the cloth is covered and do not crowd it in the pot. Rinse in warm water and hang to dry. Wash a second time if the water is particularly dirty.

Things that are handy to have

- Brayer and/or foam roller (the single handle small circumference dense foam roller)
- We will do a little bit of screen printing. If you have a small screen with an image, thermofax, etc, then bring it along with a squeegee.
- Selection of paint brushes - bristle and/or foam - various sizes
- Tools that you use in your studio practice.