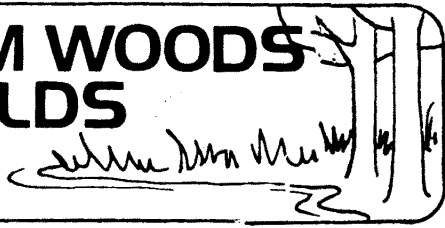


FROM WOODS & FIELDS



EASTER EGGS by Connie Magoffin

A recent note and dyed fleece sample sent by Rosemary Olmsted, now back in Plattsburgh, N.Y., reminded me of two things. First, several of you have continued to send me your naturally dyed experiments and next month I will pass these on to all of you. It won't be long before those first spring plants will be tempting us. Rosemary's letter also reminded me of an idea she shared with our dye class. Her Swiss grandmother dyed her Easter eggs with onion skins. Since then several others have mentioned that it was also a traditional egg dye in their family and I have been given ideas for several different procedures. Rosemary let me copy an article from Sunset magazine on the topic.

Coincidentally, Pat Olsen called me the same week and shared with me a current article on dyeing eggs with natural dyes from Organic Gardening and Farming. The basic idea is to prepare the egg by applying to its surface an object such as a leaf or flower which will resist the dye, to hold it in place by one of a number of different methods and to dye it in a non-toxic natural dye such as onion skins. Following is an accumulation of ideas from several sources for dyeing this year's Easter eggs naturally. Our family did this last year and they were without question the most beautiful eggs we've ever eaten! (And we almost didn't!)

A. Egg preparation (use eggs that have no protective coating):

1. Materials for patterns:

- Flexible leaves or small flowers or petals; those which make delicate patterns such as ferns work well.
- Sunset suggested for line patterns to use different thicknesses of rubber bands or a hairnet. A neighbor uses the net onion bags tied tightly around the egg to produce a fishnet pattern.
- Self stick labels can be used for bold designs. I would think they could even be cut into clever shapes.
- Another neighbor uses bees wax to resist the dye, applied in a similar manner as for making Ukrainian eggs I suspect.
- Flat objects make the clearest impressions.

2. To fix pattern making materials on the egg:

- A leaf or whatever is centered on a 4" square of nylon stocking and it is gently but firmly stretched around the egg and tied at the bottom with a string or thread. The nylon is also used with self stick labels.
- The rubber bands are merely stretched in place.
- The hairnet or net bags are tied in place tightly.
- Browne suggests dipping the leaves or flowers into cooking oil or unbeaten eggwhite to hold them in place until ready to wrap in the nylon. This is optional!
- Browne also suggests placing the egg in a small bottle cap to hold it while working.
- Light cotton cloth may be used for wrapping instead of the nylon according to Browne (Pat Olsen suggested cheesecloth). Be sure the dye can penetrate.
- Two sources suggested overlapping wet onion skins over the entire surface of the egg (ferns or flowers) may still be placed underneath. I used this method last year and used sewing thread wound tightly over the skins to hold them in place. This produces a beautiful marbled effect. Do try some of these.

B. To prepare the dyebaths:

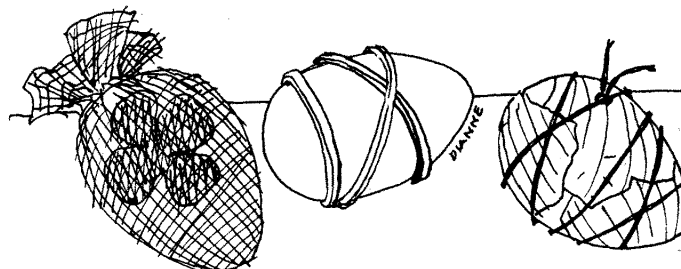
1. Dyes:

brown onion skins for yellows to browns
red onion skins for a light brown-red
red cabbage leaves for a robin's egg blue
coffee or tea for a light tan
beet juice for a light gray

Other materials you might want to experiment with are peeling from oranges, pears, or yellow apples, spinach, cranberries, fresh herbs, such as parsley, carrot tops, and I would think such spices as tumeric and ground cinnamon would work.

- For best results use an enamel, stainless steel, or glass pan.
- Add chopped dye material to water and simmer gently (to avoid evaporation cover pot), for approximately 20-40 minutes. Amount of material used and timing depends on depth of color desired. Strain out and discard material.
- Add 1 tsp - 1 tbsp vinegar (depending on amount of dyebath prepared). Browne says not to use vinegar with onion skins, Sunset says to use it!?

continued

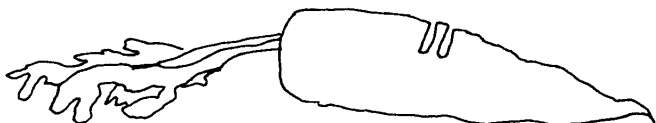


C. Dyeing:

1. Gently lower prepared eggs into dyebath and simmer uncovered for about 20 minutes. This of course also cooks the eggs.
2. Rinse in cool water.
3. Unwrap and remove any decorations.
4. Store in refrigerator.
5. *Sunset* suggests for carrot tops to cool eggs and dyebath separately, unwrap eggs and refrigerate eggs in cold dyebath for 4 hours or longer. *Browne* suggests to darken some dyes leave wrapping on egg and refrigerate in dyebath after cooking for overnight.
6. When eggs are dry, you may want to rub them with salad oil, wipe dry, and buff for a beautiful luster.
7. If wax patterns are applied, I would suggest removing them by holding the egg over a candle flame and wipe each area as the wax melts with a soft cloth or tissue.
8. Of course, the dyebath can be used again.

D. Additional notes:

1. Although you may obtain bright colors from onion skins, don't expect bright colors from all the dyes. Some are soft and subtle, but just as beautiful. We are not trying to copy Easter egg dyeing kits.
2. Sometimes the flowers or leaves you use may impart their own color to the egg surface. Be sure they are not poisonous!
3. *Browne* says that if left in dry storage the insides will harden and shrink. (I have only tried this with my uncooked Ukrainian eggs which have been varnished.)
4. Do be careful not to use poisonous plants! Use only ones you are absolutely sure are edible.



If you have any questions be sure to call and I hope you have an especially Happy Easter.

Besides information from friends, the following two articles were used as sources:

"Leafy eggs for Easter," *Sunset* (The Magazine of Western Living), Central Edition, April 1976, Vol. 156, # 4, pp. 88-9.

"Easter Eggs Dyed and Decorated the Natural Way," by Juanita Browne, *Organic Farming and Gardening*, March 1977, pp. 108, 110-11.

Happy Easter!

THE RIGID HEDDLE

LARGE PROJECTS - part 2

Tips on Finishing

Washing and shrinkage of large pieces can be done in the bathtub.

Yardage is often dried at tension to offset shrinkage, fiber movement, and to set the weave.

I often use my floor standing, foldable drying rack (set in the bathtub or outside) and clothspin or tie the warp ends onto the bars after stretching the fabric at tension.

Some people roll their yardage around large tubes or rollers letting it dry at tension.

It is often easier to do the finishing on individual sections before putting the piece together, because there is less bulk and weight to deal with.

Large heavy wall pieces and curtains should be hung for one month before doing the final hemming or finishing to allow for stretching. (Weighting a piece will stretch it faster.)

Before cutting a handwoven fabric, draw the cutting line onto the fabric and staystitch along both sides of the chalk line.

It is very helpful to have a fiber board wall to pin pieces up on to and view and manipulate them. Fiber board is available at lumber yards in 4'x8' sheets. It is sturdier if you use contact cement (1 gallon) and put two sheets together (back to back) before screwing them into the studs in your wall. For pieces weighing more than 25 pounds, some people put up particle board and nail into it.

When you finish weaving a piece, it may need to go in a closet for a few weeks before you can look at it objectively and choose the finishes that will emphasize its strong points. (Ah, ye who procrastinate . . .)

Finishes

Following is a list of some of the finishes you might want to consider:

Fringe

knotted
twisted
braided
macrame
add on new or extra
twined
wrapped
brushed
crocheted
sewn (machine)
sewn (hand)
hemstitching
woven
tassels

Non-Fringe

sewn
faced
tucked back in
applied
plaited border
pressed between wooden slats (glued)
whipped
Philippine