



by Connie Magoffin

Now that mother and baby are home and doing well, it is time to get back to the business of natural dyeing. Quite some time ago (out of embarrassment I refrain from revealing exactly how long ago it actually was) Sonja Carlson sent me the results of some experiments she did using crepe-backed satin made of acetate rayon. I held on to the samples hoping to do additional experiments with dyeing rayon. However, since I still haven't followed through with my plans and because several people have asked about dyeing fibers other than the standard wool, it is time to pass Sonja's results on to you.

Two natural dyes were used, onion skins and indigo. The acetate (weight not given) was premordanted with the five standard mordants, alum, tin, copper, chrome and iron. Some unmordanted fabric samples were also used. For the first experiment, Sonja used 2 oz. of unsoaked onion skins which were simmered for 1 hour to extract the dye. Both unmordanted and tin-mordanted fabric were dyed in the onion skin bath for 30 min. Some of the dyed, tin-mordanted fabric was then top-dyed with indigo for 20 min. Some unmordanted fabric was dyed separately in indigo.

For the second experiment, again dye was extracted from 2 oz. of onion skins by simmering for 1 hour. Premordanted fabric (this time it was alum, copper, chrome and iron) was simmered in the onion dye for 45 min.; a sample of each was then top-dyed in indigo. Sonja light-tested each sample for one week.

These experiments were exciting to me. Enhanced by the satin weave, the colors appeared rich and lustrous. This fabric appears to be an excellent, and I assume, less costly, substitute for silk.

Dye Garden

The first meeting for the Weavers Guild of Minnesota Dye Garden at the Arboretum was March 15. We are planning to meet regularly this spring and summer on the third Thursday of each month at Ruth Arnold's home (1500 Kelly Drive, Mpls., 55427; 544-0779). Coffee is at 7:15 p.m. and the meeting will be from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. If you would like to join us and were not at the first meeting, call Ruth or me before April 19.

The following chart indicates the color and light test results:

	Color	Color after light test
Experiment One		
Unmordanted:		
onion dyed	med. peach	same
top-dyed with indigo	med. blue	same
Tin:		
onion dyed	lt. yellow	very lt. yellow
top-dyed with indigo	blue blue-green	slightly lighter
Experiment Two		
Alum:		
onion dyed	yellow gold	very lt. beige gold
top-dyed with indigo	blue blue-green	same
Copper:		
onion dyed	lt. gold	same
top-dyed with indigo	blue blue-green	same
Chrome:		
onion dyed	med. gold	same
top-dyed with indigo	blue blue-green	same
Iron:		
onion dyed	lt. golden beige	same
top-dyed with indigo	blue blue-green	same

