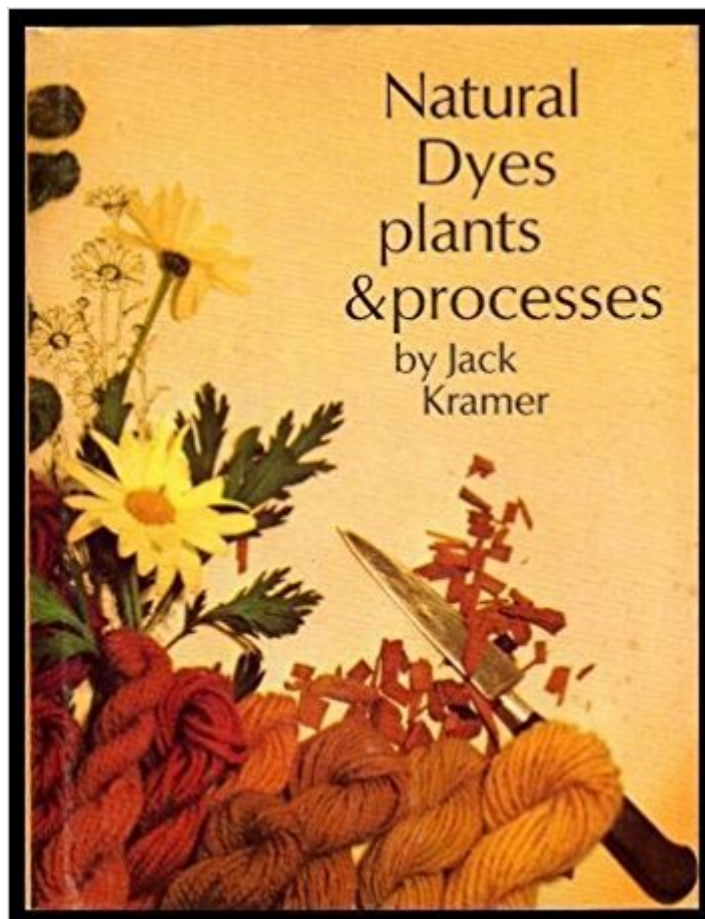


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Natural Dyes, Plants And Processes



Synopsis

Natural Dyes, Plants and Processes

Book Information

Hardcover: 144 pages

Publisher: Macmillan Publishing Company (November 1972)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0684128284

ISBN-13: 978-0684128283

Package Dimensions: 8.6 x 6.6 x 0.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,378,765 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #65 in [Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Chemical > Plant Design](#) #8417 in [Books > Science & Math > Chemistry](#) #9140 in [Books > Science & Math > Technology](#)

Customer Reviews

Natural Dyes, Plants and Processes

I will almost certainly never have cause to use the information from Natural Dyes. Still, being somewhat of a "19th century man", (with a nod to Mr. Blankenship who brought this book to my attention) and someone who is genuinely curious about all sorts of random things, I am very impressed with this book. The instructions for finding, creating and dying natural fibers are broken down into very simply steps with recipes and photos, making the entire process very simple. A few things that impressed me the most:(1) "mordanting" - or fixing - colors. Kramer recommends a variety of "fixers" to adhere the dye to the fabric. (He recommends wool, although linen, cotton and silk are also discussed briefly throughout the book.) A surprise to me, the type of mordant you use (be it chrome, tin, iron, alum or copper) effects the color the dye will take. As is standard, recipes and directions (and precautions) are very clear, with photos to illustrate.(2) Mixing (and "color combinations") - we all remember the Le Bon color triangle (primary and secondary colors) - Kramer provides some tips for "top dying" - dipping the fabric in more than one dye to create a different hue. Very interesting stuff.(3) The "dyers' garden." I read and re-read this section, as I was fascinated by the variety of plants that are used to dye, and the non-intuitive colors they give off. For example, peach and heather dye green; plum leaves dye khaki; and lichen dye an orange-yellow.(4) The

color chart at the end of the book was marvelous: pages of naturally dyed wool illustrating the variation in color, hue and tint depending on the plant used and whether the fabric was "bloomed" (a brightening process by adding tin and cream of tartar to the dye) or "saddened" (a muting process where iron is added to the dye). With this chart and the recipes and instructions, you can get a very good idea of what the finished product will be. For those interested in natural dyes, this has it all. For those of us who won't dye, it's a very interesting intellectual exercise.

very useful

First let me state that I am not a weaver. I have had this book about the house for several years now (it was first published in 1972) and the reason for my having it is due to pure interest and curiosity. I have a very old piece of material woven by my great, great, great possibly great grandmother who was a weaver and produced this cloth well before the civil war. It is completely handmade and is dyed a very dark brown and since that was well before the time of commercial dyes being available, it is completely natural. A few years ago my wife and I raised Black Welsh Mountain Sheep. We had one of the first small flocks in the United States (there are still less than 1,000 of these sheep in the U.S.) and it is a very old breed from the U.K. These sheep are naturally all black and rather small as sheep go. (A delightful breed to work with by the way). Because of these animals we began receiving requests from various weavers for their wool. I found that there is an entire subculture of weavers out there that I had no idea existed. After attending many arts and craft shows I also found that many of these weavers use only natural dyes in their craft. I also found that there was a distinct difference in the color of natural versus commercial, i.e. chemical. They, the natural, simply looked better. A bit later I was attending one of my beloved Mountain Man Rendezvous and found an old man who decorated gourds using all natural dyes. The old goat would not share information with me. I work with gourds and anything that will stain wood or cloth will stain a gourd. Anyway, I became interested in natural dyes and began my search. This small book by Jack Kramer provided all the information I needed. The author discusses the entire process of dyeing material (with emphasis on wool), including preparing yarns, washing yarns and mordanting wool and the various chemicals used in this process, something I was completely ignorant of. Most important to me though was the discussion of the various materials used to create different colors. I know a bit about plants, but I never dreamed that so many different ones produced so many colors. Various trees, flowers, vines, bark, flower peddles, weeds, bushes, leaves...species after species. Each plant produces different colors; many several colors depending when they are harvested and what part of

the plant is used. This for me is fascinating. The author gives an extensive list of plants, their properties and where they may be found or how they may be grown. All of these plants are quite common or very easy to grow. This book goes on to provide quite a number of dye recipes; with quite a range of plants covered. The text is quite easy to understand and this book is quite well illustrated with photographs, both color and black and white, and drawings. The possible drawback for this work is that the plants discussed do seem to be more concentrated on the East Coast and the Midwest, leaving most of the area west of the Rockies and Southwest out. I also have a strong feeling that the author has made it sound a lot easier than it really is. Some of this stuff looks like it would be flat hard work. I also note, after reviewing the offerings on , that there are dozens of newer books out on this subject. New is not always best, but I am sure that much has been learned in the over thirty years since this work was written. This was a dying art form until a few years ago and so much knowledge had been lost over the years that we are still trying to "relearn" it. On the other hand, everything I read in this work seemed quite logical and doable. I personally will probably never dye one skein of wool, but this work gave me the information I needed for my purposes, i.e. feeding a curiosity, so therefore I am giving it five stars. I would like to see a review of this work by someone who has actually used the directions provided. On the other hand, I note that the book does not cost all that much through the used book section of , so you might want to just take a chance. I do know that I have examined and viewed literally hundreds of hand woven items over the years, probably thousands, and that the naturally colored ones are simply prettier and pop more than those that have been prepared with commercial dye. Even poorly woven pieces look better! As the natural dyes fade, as is their nature, they actually look better and better! This would be a wonderful skill to have and I envy those that have it. Bottom line...it met my need perfectly and I found it a dandy book. Don Blankenship The Ozarks

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