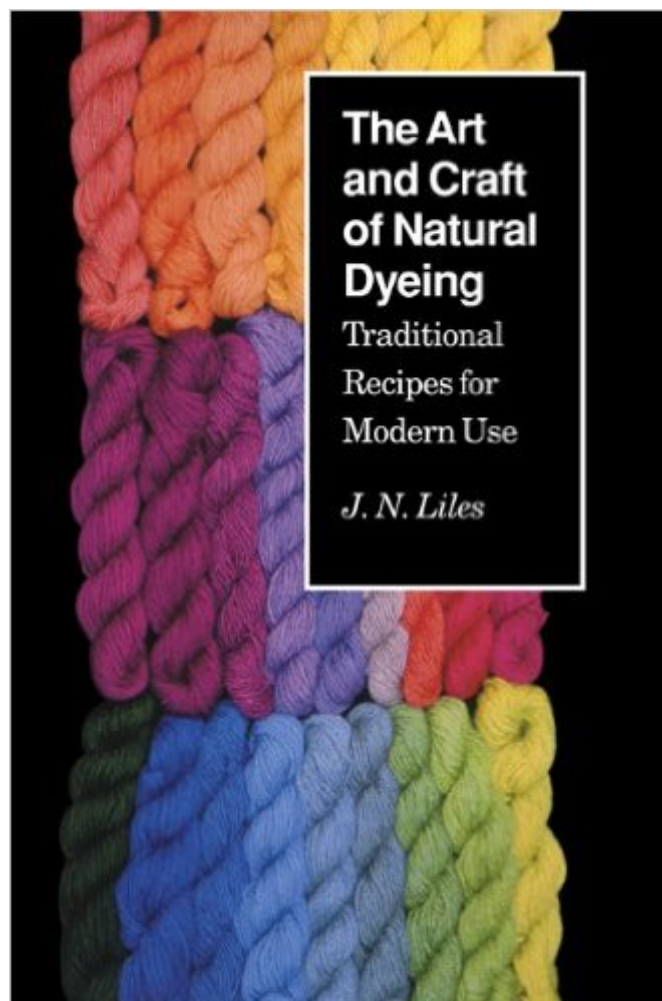


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The Art And Craft Of Natural Dyeing: Traditional Recipes For Modern Use



Synopsis

"This is the most comprehensive manual written on natural dyes since the early 1800s. Jim Liles has rescued ancient skills from near-extinction and shared them in a book that will inspire, challenge, and guide the modern dyer." —Rita Buchanan, author of *A Weaver's Garden*, and editor of the new *Brooklyn Botanic Gardens Handbook on Natural Dyes* . . . a must for every dyer. The recipes are explicit and detailed as to success and failure." —Mary Frances Davidson

For several thousand years, all dyes were of animal, vegetable, or mineral origin, and many ancient civilizations possessed excellent dye technologies. The first synthetic dye was produced in 1856, and the use of traditional dyes declined rapidly thereafter. By 1915 few non-synthetics were used by industry or craftspeople. The craft revivals of the 1920s explored traditional methods of natural dyeing to some extent, particularly with wool, although the great eighteenth- and nineteenth-century dye manuals, which recorded the older processes, remained largely forgotten. In *The Art and Craft of Natural Dyeing*, J. N. Liles consolidates the lore of the older dyers with his own first-hand experience to produce both a history of natural dyes and a practical manual for using synthetic era processes on all the natural fibers—cotton, linen, silk, and wool. A general section on dyeing and mordanting and a glossary introduce the beginner to dye technology. In subsequent chapters, Liles summarizes the traditional dye methods available for each major color group. Scores of recipes provide detailed instructions on how to collect ingredients—flowers, weeds, insects, wood, minerals—prepare the dye vat, troubleshoot, and achieve specific shades. The book will appeal not only to beginning and veteran dyers but to students of restorations and reconstruction as well as to craftspeople—spinners, quilters, weavers, knitters, and other textile artists—interested in natural dyes for their beauty and historical authenticity.

The Author: J. N. Liles is professor of zoology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He has taught at Arrowmont School and other regional craft schools and has exhibited his work at the Arrowmont School, the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild Folk Art Center, and the Carol Reece Museum.

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Customer Reviews

I have read all the current and out-of-print books on natural dyeing that are available, and I have tried a large number of the "recipes". This is the only book I would recommend. The information is factual, as opposed to anecdotal--a fault most of the others suffer from--and you actually get the colours given, if you follow the steps accurately. It is definitely the best book if you are interested in the classic natural dyes, such as indigo and madder, and it is the only one I have found that gives you a good procedure for Turkey Red! If you use this book, you won't need any others (although they are fun to read!).

This book is a must for anyone studying the history and techniques of natural dyeing. I study as well as teach techniques for historical dyes and this is the only reference that helped me with difficult questions. For example, Liles covers how the roots of the Madder plant can dye orange, red, or brown depending on the temperature of the dye bath, which he provides in great detail. I could never have consistently achieved that red red without it. Liles give an excellent overview of the evolution of natural dyes from ancient times to modern day. He includes excellent tables for chemical names, and his advise on disposal of chemicals is excellent and very much appreciated. Liles thoroughly explains the nature of dyes on various fibers and his recipes are fiber specific, although because the recipes are chaptered by color/fiber you sometimes have to look in several different sections to find out everything you may want to know about a specific dye. For natural dyers in the Society for Creative Anachronism and other historical research groups, this book is a must.

This is one of the most amazing books I have ever come across. The amount of information on this all but forgotten craft is astonishing, and a tribute to the dogged diligence of the author. As to the dye recipes, every color of the rainbow is brought forth - and the concoctions made solely from nature for producing them - including information on dyeing hard to dye cottons and linens. An amazing guide from this master of natural dyeing.

This book is geared more toward precise recipes and reproducibility. It does not discuss the growing of dye plants, but is aimed at those using purchased dyestuffs. The recipes are organized by color instead of by plant, with some interesting discussion of historical colors (the author is involved in historical reenactments). A few color plates are relegated to the middle of the book. Getting an idea of the finished product for a given recipe required a lot of hunting around and digging through captions. I did appreciate the historical and biochemical information given for many of the plant dyes, though. Although this book was less enjoyable to leaf through than other natural dyeing books, it seems very well-researched and practical.

This is a book for the serious natural dyer, not the weekend crafter. I really appreciate that Liles explains the chemical reactions occurring in the dye process, and has also done extensive research into 18th and 19th century dyeing methods, often quoting original texts. His recipes are created from his own research and experiments. For these reasons, the book is not always easy to read, and the recipes are quite involved with many steps and nuances. There is a lot of information that could easily overwhelm the novice. This book is great for people wishing to create high-quality, lasting color on a variety of natural fibers. He is very clear about which dyes are light and wash fast, which is important for those wishing to make usable, sellable items.

There's several books on natural dyeing available right now, and they probably all have their merits. A lot of them are intended to be easygoing introductions for the amateur; this is nothing to turn your nose up at, because we all start as amateurs and we need that kind of guidance. This book serves a different purpose. This is a compendium of Mr. Liles' careful research with natural dyes and mordants, closely observed and detailed for the adventurous home dyer. Every color of the rainbow on every kind of natural fabric (including cotton, often tricky to dye with natural dyes) is discussed here. If you want a magnificent reference source on natural dyes, something you will never exhaust--pardon the pun--this is the book to get.

Although packed with a vast amount of information on natural dye history and formulas, this book reads like a dissertation. It's lengthy and exacting on all accounts. If preparing and using natural dyes sounds like something "fun" to do, this book may just leach all the excitement right out of you.

Probably the most exhaustive guide to natural dying available in readable form. Offers many options for dye recipes. Those I have tried have worked well. The reader needs to pay attention to every

word in the text, though, such as references to the water the type of water used, as the results may be dramatically different.

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