

Why dye naturally?

Natural colourants are biodegradable, non-toxic and non-allergenic, making them generally more respectful of the environment and human beings, as they do not contain the carcinogenic components found in many synthetic colourants.

All pollinating insects and hummingbirds love dye plant gardens!

Taking care of your knitwear, washing and sun exposure

Hand wash with a pH-neutral wool soap, ideally at less than 30 °C, avoid wringing, roll the knit in a towel to absorb water and dry flat, out of direct sunlight, without spinning or tumble drying (even for *superwash* wool).

Knitwear should always be folded and stored away from direct light. It's best not to hang them on a hook or hanger, as they may stretch and lose their shape.

Natural dyes that bleed!

The materials used to dye wool (plants, insects) can be used fresh or dried. They are placed in a pot with water, after being finely chopped or ground to extract maximum colour. Before the dye bath is used, it is filtered, but even after filtering (sometimes several stages of filtering) a certain quantity of fine particles remain in the dye bath, and it is virtually impossible to remove them all. This means that some of them will end up in the yarn. Some fall out as the yarn dries. Some fall out while winding the ball, which tends to leave a layer of fine particles on your table that is usually not apparent until you wipe it. Some fall off during knitting, which is usually only visible if you've applied hand lotion. You may see a streak of colour on your fingers, where the yarn has rubbed. Finally, some particles remain in the yarn and fall out when you wash it. But what about dyers who use extracts? Will their yarn still contain fine particles? Yes, they will. Extracts are not perfectly 100% soluble; there's almost always a small portion that remains solid. It also depends on the dye: for example, you have to rinse again and again with cochineal...

Good natural dyers will go through several stages of washing before the yarn is dried, labelled and sold. But no matter what, you'll probably see some colour in the wash water (even more so when the dyer uses raw dyes!), and that's normal.

Here's an example to illustrate what I mean. The first image is the rinse water after dyeing. The second image shows a deposit of fine particles at the bottom of the container a few minutes later.



But what if it isn't? If you're really losing colour with every wash? Contact me! No matter how careful I am, there are a ton of variables that influence natural dyeing, and despite my best efforts, it's impossible to fully control them. Send me a calm, collected email and explain what's going on.

References

<https://alpenglowyarn.wordpress.com/2017/08/27/bleeding-natural-dyes/>

<https://maiwa.com/collections/natural-dyes>