

# APRIL 2020 AT HOME FAMILY ART ENCOUNTERS:

Dyeing wool or yarn using household items

For this Art Encounters, we will show you how to dye your own wool or yarn with common household items.

Using white acrylic, cotton, or wool yarn, you can combine your dyes to create colors for your own weavings (see [March At Home Art Encounters](#) to learn more about DIY looms and weaving). If you don't have these yarns around the house, you can buy them on Amazon [here](#), and white acrylic and cotton yarn can be purchased from Walmart [here](#).



## EXAMPLE WEAVING WITH VEGETAL DYES

Amber & Twyla Gene, Our Father's Design, 2005  
Education Collection, Kennedy Museum of Art

• Juniper and alfalfa hay (freshly cut).

• Ripe yucca fruit (skin).

• Natural white and black sheep wool mixed with mohair and dyed with commercial black dye.

• Natural white sheep wool mixed with mohair.

• Natural white and grey sheep wool mixed with mohair and dyed with juniper berries. This wool was handspun and dyed by Amber.

## GENERAL DYEING TIPS:

- Wear gloves to keep the dyes from staining your skin.
- If you are using wool, do not add to boiling mixtures. Let mixtures cool first and then soak your wool (you may have to soak it for longer). Cotton and acrylic yarn is fine in hot mixtures.
- Before placing yarn in the dye, make sure you unwind it and tie at the top (creating a loop or O shape) so all of it is exposed but doesn't completely unravel.
- To remove dye fragrances, rinse wool/yarn in laundry detergent & cold water after it has dried.

## ITEMS & COLORS

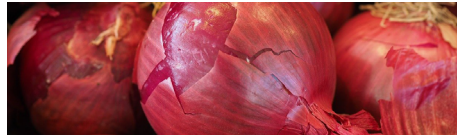
---



### BEETS

**vibrant red**

Instructions: Chop up 3 - 4 beets and cover with water in a pot. Bring to a boil, and simmer for an hour, or until you get the color you'd like. Remove the beet chunks from the pot, and add yarn. Continue to simmer for 45 minutes. Turn off heat and allow yarn to soak for a few hours or as long as it takes to get the deepness of color you want.



### RED ONION SKINS

**pink - deep red**

(depending on amt. of onions)

Instructions: \*Note: Yellow onion skins will create a tan or light brown color with the same process!\* Place onion skins in a pot & cover generously with water. Bring to a boil, then simmer for ~30-40 minutes. Once the dye looks right to you in the pot, strain out the skins. Place your yarn in the mixture and let soak for as long as you please. Rinse afterwards and let dry.



### COFFEE

**light brown - dark brown**

Instructions: Boil coffee grounds in a pot of water and let sit until it reaches a very dark brown, as if you are making a very strong batch of coffee. When you feel like it's done, filter out the coffee grounds using a French press, cheesecloth, etc. Pour into a large bowl, add your yarn and let sit for a couple of hours or overnight. Watch a step-by-step video [here](#).



### RED CABBAGE

**purple or blue**

Instructions: Follow instructions for red onion skin but with red cabbage to create a purple color. To create a blue color, follow the same steps but add baking soda to the final dye.



### BLACK TEA

**light brown - dark brown**

(depending on amt. of tea & soak time)

Instructions: Make a big batch of black tea in a pot of boiling water, let your yarn or wool soak overnight and dry out the next day.



### GROUND TURMERIC

**vibrant yellow/orange**

Instructions: Combine 1 ounce of turmeric with 3 quarts of water in a pot and bring to a boil (use more turmeric for a deeper/brighter color). After unwinding and tying yarn at the top, place it in the boiling mixture for 30 min. Use tongs to take out your yarn and rinse with cold water.

#### Sources

Onion skins: <http://www.allnaturaldyeing.com/onion-skin-dye/>

Turmeric: <http://www.lionbrand.com/blog/food-safe-dyeing-turmeric/>

Red cabbage, beets, other materials: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fImpanUPjS8>

Beets: <https://www.hgtv.com/design/make-and-celebrate/handmade/the-beet-goes-on>

Black tea and Coffee: <https://knitsewhappy.wordpress.com/2015/09/05/tutorial-how-to-dye-yarn-with-coffee-and-tea/>