



by Connie J. Magoffin

On several occasions this summer and fall a most tolerant husband came home to dye pots simmering on the stove rather than dinner. Each year I like to try dyeing with plants I have never used before. Often the plants are not even identified until they are home. While the chopped plants are simmering with my sample yarns, I curl up on the sofa with a cup of tea and my Peterson Wildflower Guide comparing descriptions and illustrations with the plant sample I have saved out to press.

When I'm at my most efficient, this is how I sample new plants: Usually 1 oz. of plant material is chopped and added to 1 quart of water in a small pot I keep handy especially for sampling. The sample yarns consist of 12" strands of wool, one each pre-mordanted with alum, tin, copper, chrome, and iron, and one unmordanted strand. Each strand is knotted according to my own key: one knot for alum, two knots for tin, etc. The six strands are then knotted together and labeled (on masking tape with a Sanford Sharpie marker that I know is waterproof) with the plant name and weight. To avoid forgetting the data, while the pot simmers I immediately prepare an index card.

I use a rubber stamp that I purchased last year from Straw Into Gold which has places for the most important dye information. Plant name, plant and fiber weight, where picked, date picked, date dyed and any special dyeing techniques are recorded. This of course can be done in the same manner without the stamp. The only information that needs to be added later is the dyeing time and any additions in technique; whether the yarn was cooled in the bath, if an acid or base was added to the bath, etc. I also punch 6 holes along one edge of the card. The entire process of sampling, except for the hour that the yarns simmer by themselves probably doesn't take more than 10 minutes of my attention.

When the samples are rinsed and dried, each strand is folded in half and attached through the holes with a lark's head in a fixed order. One half of each strand can then

be folded to the back of the card and covered so that the card can be placed in a window for light testing on the remaining half of each strand. The two ends of each strand are then always together so a comparison can be easily made to see if fading has occurred during the light test.

The following ten plants were tested by me for the first time this year. As I started to write the specific color results for each mordant, I realized that you would probably not get that exact color anyway, there are too many variables. In addition, my sample yarns are almost two years old; freshly mordanted yarns would most likely yield slight variations. So.....I will mention the overall color impression that I get from looking at each sample card or I'll specify a mordant and color if I think it's particularly special. It is best for you to do your own samples, with your water, yarn, mordant recipes, etc before you do any quantity dyeing.

Remember that I purposely use a large proportion of dye plant to yarn in my sampling to obtain the full color potential of a plant. If the same colors are desired, that proportion must be kept in mind when larger quantities of yarn or fleece are dyed. From my samples I can choose only those mordants with each dye plant that offer colors that I particularly like. Sometimes all five mordants produce a pleasing range of colors with a plant, but more often only one or two of the mordants offer a color I would want to duplicate. In this way I eliminate a lot of work for a disappointing result.

Hopefully, you will still have time to try some of these plants yourself before the frost hits (Oh! it hasn't already happened has it?) Or, file it away for next year and spend some time this winter preparing sample strands and cards so you are ready to go next spring when those pesky weeds that no one else wants start beckoning to us.

1. Queen Anne's Lace, Wild Carrot (Daucus carota)- flowers, leaves and stems: alum and tin - bright yellow-greens, chrome - brass
2. Great Solomon's Seal (Polygonatum canaliculatum) - leaves, stems, and purple berries: tin - rich butterscotch

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Spectacular" a success.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Christensen
Assistant Superintendent
Creative Activities Department

P.S. The Guild display case was beautiful, as always. Thanks to those who shared.

1981 Minnesota State Fair
Sept. 11th, 1981

Dear Weavers:

I wanted to thank you one and all for your stunning performances on t.v. during the Minnesota State Fair and let you know how much I appreciate your cooperation during what must have been a pretty busy time anyway.

I enjoyed meeting your representatives and especially enjoyed seeing the lovely work everyone was doing. My best wishes to all of you and the future of your organization.

Sincerely,

Deborah J. Fisher
Publicity Department

A LETTER FROM A NEW GALLERY

By Design
a gallery of contemporary crafts

Dear Weavers Guild,

On August 28, BY DESIGN opened in the Lumber Exchange Building in downtown Minneapolis. We are featuring the work of craftspeople from across the nation in ongoing and special exhibits in a variety of media including clay, glass, fiber, wood and metal. We are pleased to be able to serve as both a much needed artists' representative and as a source for collectors and patrons in this area.

We would like to be included on your mailing list to receive announcements about exhibits, workshops, etc. If any of your members would be interested in showing us their work, please ask them to call or write for an appointment. Our address is:

BY DESIGN

Lumber Exchange Building
10 South 5th Street
Minneapolis MN 55402
612/333-2204

Sincerely,

Nancy Gruver
Nancy Gruver

Sue Nardie

Sue Nardie

FROM WOODS AND FIELD continued from p. 8

3. Gumweed (Grindelia squarrosa) - flowers, leaves and stems: variety of golds
4. Common Morning Glory, Blue (Ipomoea purpurea) - flowers: alum and tin - lovely soft yellows, leaves and stems gave similar, but slightly duller colors
5. Bouncing Bet (Saponaria officinalis) - flowers, leaves, and stems: light gray-greens
6. Lamb's-Quarters (Chenopodium alba) - flowers, leaves, and stems: golds and olives, chrome - rich rust
7. Blue Vervain (Lobelia siphilitica) - flowers, leaves, and stems: medium browns, some golden browns
8. Birdsfoot Trefoil (Lotus corniculatus) flowers: alum and tin - rich yellow-gold, chrome - brassy orange-gold
9. Jewelweed, Pale Touch-Me-Not (Impatiens pallida) - a few flowers, leaves, and stems: tin - fluorescent yellow-orange, chrome - rich orange-rust
10. Marijuana, Hemp (Cannabis sativa) - leaves and stems: alum and tin - yellow-greens, chrome - brass

