

## Natural Dye Project


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For this project, I found it to be very fun and experimental. It's almost crazy to believe that you can actually make natural dyes out of things that are sitting around in your kitchen. For this project in particular, I decided to use an old white cotton t-shirt that was in my closet. As for the dye, I had a bunch of yellow onions in my fridge. Using the yellow onion skin, I made a natural dye out of it. Dyes are substances used to add colors to textiles. Natural dyes come from materials found in nature, mostly derived from plants, and in some cases bugs or minerals. Natural dyeing requires a large amount of water to dissolve the dyestuff in a concentrated bath. Doing this process and documenting every single thing was very entertaining!


Onion skin dye has been used for many years throughout the Middle East and Europe. For example in Azerbaijan, yellow onion skin is used to decorate a special holiday basket filled with sweets, nuts, fruits, and dyed eggs. One amazing thing about onion skins is that you can make a dye from yellow and red onion skins. You can produce different types of colors with the onion skins. It depends on how many onion skins you peel and how long you leave it to boil for. For example, like I stated before, I peeled onion skin from six onions and left it to boil for 40 minutes because I wanted a very visible orange color. So it honestly just depends.

For the dyeing process, I first started off by peeling the skin of about six yellow onions. The reason I chose six was because I wanted the dye color to come out with enough color as possible. I placed the onion skin onto a medium metal bowl. After I did that, I got a cooking pot. I inserted the yellow onion skins into the pot. Then, I took the metal bowl that was used for the onion skins and I filled the whole bowl with cold water. I did this twice and inserted the water into the pot. I then turned the stove on low/medium heat, but as time went by I raised the heat a little more. I took a wooden cooking spoon and started to stir the yellow onion skins. I let it sit there for about 40 minutes so that I can get the exact color dye I wanted. After I saw that the dye

was at the color I wanted it to be at, I turned the stove off and started to gather the metal bowl and a strainer. I placed the strainer on top of the same metal bowl, and I strained the onion skin water from the pot. I discarded the onion skins because I couldn't figure out what to do with them anymore. So as the dye water was cooling down a little bit, I went ahead and started to get my white shirt into the rubber band position. I ended up choosing the spiral pattern for the shirt. I honestly felt like I didn't do it correctly, which was okay. As for the video I was watching, the woman said that she let the shirt sit in the natural dye water for about 5-8 hours. I left mine sitting in it for five hours. The woman also recommended that it was better to put the shirt inside of a plastic bag, rather than letting it sit in the water. I chose to leave it in the bowl because I wanted the shirt to absorb as much of the dye as it could. After about five hours, I took the bowl and discarded the dye water. I took apple cider vinegar (which was the only kind of vinegar I had available in my house) and poured it into the bowl and soaked the shirt in it. I read that this is supposed to keep the dye from fading away. I then took the shirt out of the bowl and drained it in the sink. Vinegar has a very strong smell so what I did is I washed the shirt with laundry detergent and let it air dry after.



After completing this project, I realized that the outcome was not what I expected. Not in a bad way, but in a good way. I thought the outcome was going to be a complete fail but when I cut the rubber bands off of the shirt I fell in love! What I loved most about the outcome was that the ends of the shirt had a very dark color to it. It brings out the whole shirt! I did pick a very long shirt, which was my dad's, and I'm most likely going to cut it and turn it into a crop top! The process of the woman's youtube video versus mine is completely different, of course. She actually took her time to perfectly wrap her shirt up with rubber bands, but I personally couldn't find a good way to keep the shirt in place when trying to attach the bands. It still came out



amazing though and I am looking forward to trying this dye method on pillow cases, face masks, and more shirts.

This project was honestly very fun to do! I haven't done anything hands on throughout my online courses so I found this very useful. I will definitely use this for the future and pass is on to peers to do, also! I was very happy with the outcome. Would definitely do this again and try different types of ingredients.



## *Process*

1.



Here are the yellow onion skins inside of the pot. I realized I put a little too much water shortly after I took this picture, so I ended up taking some of it out.

2.



In this photo, I am draining out the dye water and inserting it into a metal bowl.

3.



While the dye water was chilling, I went ahead and got the shirt ready for the spiral dye design. I used 3 rubber bands, but doubled them so that they won't break.

4.



Here I have two bowls and a metal spoon. I used the metal spoon like the woman in the video. I carefully poured the liquid onto the bowl with the shirt.

5.



Here is the shirt sitting in the dye water. Left it in for about 5 hours.

6.



This is the finished product. I am very impressed by the way it came out!

## Cite

*Onion Skins*. Our Natural Dyestuffs - Onion Skins. (n.d.).

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