

DYEING WOOL WITH FUNGI

You will need:

Approximately 100g clean mushrooms, coarsely chopped
Approximately 100g of light- coloured natural wool
A mixing spoon
A large saucepan
Approximately 3 litres water (2 litres if using dried mushrooms)
5 cm² aluminium foil

Method

1. Boil the water in the pot, add the mushrooms and simmer for 30 minutes.
2. Carefully remove the mushrooms using a straining spoon or sieve.
3. Add the wool to the water and simmer for 30-60 minutes (add more water if the volume is getting low).
4. Allow the wool to cool in the pot, wash in warm water to remove excess dye and dry (e.g. outside on a sunny day or in an airing cupboard).

NOTES

This experiment shows you how fungi can be used to dye wool a variety of beautiful colours. The dyes come from chemicals that occur naturally in fungi. Different fungi contain different chemicals and so can give different colours. If there is no colour you have probably just been unlucky - not all fungi produce dyes so try again with a different species. Different fungi give different colours, so experiment! The foil acts as mordant and brings out the colour. Try replacing with copper coins and see what effect it has.

How can I find out more?

For advice on which fungi to use and the colours they produce:

www.rbge.org.uk/research/celtica/fungi/dyes.htm

To see some beautiful results: www.somamushrooms.org/Dye/body_dye.html