

Natural Dye: Sweet Cicely

You need

- As many Sweet Cicely leaves as you can get - this is a dye which benefits from lots of dye material.
- Non reactive dye pan (stainless steel works well)
- Indicator strips
- Washing soda
- White vinegar
- Colander
- Bowl or second pan
- Stove
- Mordanted yarn (I use alum at 8%) soaked and drained
- Rainwater (if you have to use tap water leave it for a couple of hours to settle)

Step 1

Add enough washing soda to your pan of water to modify the pH to 9. This is likely to be 1-2 tablespoons but obviously depends on the amount of water.

Add the sweet Cicely leaves to the pan and heat the water to just below a simmer and keep it bubbling gently for half an hour.

Allow the liquid to cool naturally and drain through a colander into another pan or bowl.

Measure the pH of the dye in the pan and gradually add enough vinegar to bring it back to neutral. Do this step outside as the chemical reaction causes fizzing and fumes.

Step 2

Add the yarn, gently heat to hand hot and then allow pan to cool naturally.

Rinse the yarn and hang to dry.

When completely dry put yarn somewhere dark for 2-3 weeks for all the dye pigments to settle.

Wash yarn in a pH neutral detergent and leave to dry.