



NATURAL DYEING

# Bracken

yellow, green, pink and grey  
an experiment in pH

## YOU NEED

- Fronds of bracken - enough to fill the pan to the top.
- Non reactive dye pan (stainless steel works well)
- Colander
- 4 20g skeins of wool mordanted with 8% alum, soaked and drained
- Rainwater or tap water that has been left to stand for two hours
- 1 tablespoon washing soda
- pH indicator paper
- vinegar
- 1 teaspoon of ferrous sulphate

## METHOD

### Step 1 : First divide your bracken into two halves

#### Pan one

- Put one half of the bracken into a pan with rainwater, heat it to a low simmer for half an hour and then leave to cool,
- Drain the bracken out and reserve the dye.

#### Pan two

- Put the other half of the bracken into a pan with rainwater and one tablespoon of washing soda. This will make the dye pot alkali. Heat it to a low simmer for half an hour and leave to cool.
- Drain the bracken out, add a slug of vinegar and use the indicator paper to check that the dye pot is now neutral. If it is still alkali add a little more vinegar and test again.

### Step 2

- Add the previously mordanted skeins of wool, two in each pan. Heat them to hand hot for half an hour and then leave to cool.

### Step 3

- Rinse and drain the wool.
- Use an old bowl or pan to mix water and a teaspoon of ferrous sulphate.
- Add one skein from each pan to this and stir, wait for five minutes and if there has been a colour change, remove the wool and rinse very well. If there has not been a colour change remove the wool, add a little more iron and try again.

### Step 4

- Rinse the yarns, dry and store somewhere dark for a week before washing and using.