



## NATURAL DYEING

# Dahlias

Caramel

## YOU NEED

- Dahlia heads
- Non reactive dye pan (stainless steel works well)
- Stove
- Mordanted yarn (I use alum at 10%) soaked and drained
- Rainwater (if you have to use tap water leave it for a couple of hours to settle)

## TIP

The spent blooms from deadheading dahlias work well for dyeing - they do not have to be pristine.

Keep them in the freezer until you are ready to use them.

## METHOD

- Collect your dahlia flowers.
- Store your flowers -you might want to build up your collection of flowers to make a single big pot of dye. You can either dehydrate all the flowers and store in paper bags or you can freeze them.
- Prepare your wool by washing it well and then rinsing.
- Mordant your wool. You need 10% the weight of your dry wool in mordant -so for a 100g skein of wool you need 10g alum. Dissolve the mordant in a small amount of boiling water and then add to a bowl or tub of luke warm water, stir and add the socks. Leave to soak for 24 hours
- Make the dye pot. Simmer your dahlia flowers in water for 40 minutes and leave to steep overnight. Heat up again for 20 minutes and leave to cool before straining. You want there to be enough pigment in the water that you cannot see a spoon under the water. If it is too pale add in more flowers to the pot and bring to a simmer again.
- Once cool, add the wet wool to the dye pot. Make sure there is enough water to cover it and add more if you need to.
- Gradually heat up the dye pot - you don't want to over heat the water and accidentally felt your wool - if you get it to a temperature where you can put your hand in, but only just, that is perfect!
- Hold that temperature in the pan for 40 minutes and then let it cool naturally. If you would like a darker colour (and remember it will dry much paler) then leave the wool to steep in the dye pot overnight.
- Rinse the wool in plain water until the water runs clear and leave to dry naturally.
- When the wool is completely dry, put it somewhere dark to cure for a couple of weeks, this lets the dye settle into the fibres really well so it won't wash out.
- Wash with an eco detergent and leave to dry naturally.