Black Walnut
The black walnut tree (*Juglans nigra*) is native to eastern North America. The outer husk of the nut is the source of dye. The colorant is juglone. It is a direct dye, which means that no mordant is necessary when used with a protein fiber. Cellulose may be dyed as well, but that requires a mordant.

Black Walnut provides a rich brown or tan on protein fibers.

The best time to gather the nuts is when they are still green: newly fallen or ready to fall off the tree. If the nuts rot and turn black on the ground the dye may be damaged or contain less dye; although I have dyed with success. Walnuts can be used fresh or preserved in the freezer for year round dyeing.

**NOTE THAT WALNUTS WILL STAIN SKIN. WEAR GLOVES WHEN HANDLING!!!**

**Protein Fibers**
- Wool
- Silk
- Cashmere/Mohair
- Alpaca

**Dyeing**
Place the whole hulls in a pot of water to soak, preferably at least 2 days. About half way through the soaking process, I cut slits in the hulls and "smoosh" to allow the juiciness to ooze out. The water should be a deep brown.

Using a strainer, pour the contents over another bucket or pot to strain the large chunks of walnut from the soaking water. Discard the solids and save the dye “liquor”. Optional - Strain the liquid one more time through cheese cloth. This will remove any residual small pieces from the liquid.

Straining is important, as any remaining bits of hull will make dark spots on the fiber.

Add wetted fiber to the dye bath, bring it to a simmer, and keep at a gentle simmer for at least 30 minutes for silk (other fibers may take longer).

Remove the dyed fiber and rinse well. Hang to dry.

**Resources**
*Indigo, Madder & Marigold: A Portfolio of Colors from Natural Dyes* by Trudy Van Stralen

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