

Craft a Green Heart with Patrick Grant

I'm delighted to have created the green heart craft challenge for the Show The Love campaign by The Climate Coalition.

By crafting, wearing or sharing a green heart with your local MP, you can show our government and politicians that you care about climate, nature and people.

So please join me this February and get crafting, for the love of our families, our homes, our livelihoods and our planet.



For thousands of years we dyed our clothing and textiles naturally using plants grown locally but in the 1800's chemists developed synthetic dyes and this ancient craft was consigned to a hobby. Whilst modern dyes give a range of bright, long lasting colours, they are mostly made from fossil fuels, have a heavy carbon footprint and because many are toxic, they can be harmful to the people working with them and the environments they're later released into.

One way to be kinder to the planet is to use natural, renewable, compostable dyes made from plants. Not only are they non toxic, they also sequester carbon as they grow.



So I have enlisted the help of my good friend Justine Aldersey-Williams from The Wild Dyery who is a plant dyeing specialist. She has provided the technical know-how needed to make a patchwork fabric heart, using reclaimed fabric, that we'll dye various shades of green using a natural dye.

You will need:

- Piece of old denim measuring 23cm x 23cm
- 5 x strips of old white fabric (natural fibre e.g. cotton pillowcase) measuring:-
 - 2 strips 7.5cm x 23cm
 - 5 strips 5.5cm x 23cm
- 1 skein white embroidery thread
- Embroidery needle
- 10g chlorophyllin dye
- 25g mordant (organic aluminium lactate or aluminium acetate)
- Old pan and spoon
- Old mixing jug and teaspoon
- 1 sheet A4 paper
- Pencil and rubber
- Pen
- Ruler
- Scissors
- Pins
- Apron & rubber gloves
- Face mask

TIP

Work with friends, family, classmates to make use of your dye and mordant. You need 5g mordant/100g fibre and 10g dye/100g fibre. And use any remaining pretreatment and dye to 'green' an old white shirt or t-shirt.

Health and Safety:

- Wear a face mask when measuring and mixing fine powders and work in a well ventilated area
- Allocate old kitchen equipment for dyeing
- Protect work surfaces
- Avoid contact with skin by wearing apron and rubber gloves
- If doing this craft with children, we'd recommend mixing up the dye before you start the craft.
- The dye is natural but not edible so make sure any leftover dye is not left within reach of young children.

Instructions

Step 1: To make a template, measure a 21cm square of paper, fold in half then draw a 2cm border around unfolded sides. Sketch half a heart from folded centre line to border and cut out.

Step 2: Cut open the leg of a pair of old and unwanted jeans/denim jacket etc., pin your template in place. Draw the inner heart using chalk or a pen. Cut the square 1cm (seam allowance) from the outer edge. Cut out heart shape.



Step 3: To pretreat your materials with the mordant, first weigh them, then scour (hot wash with an eco-detergent) just the white fabric to remove any conditioners. Allow 5g mordant for every 100g fibre. Embroidery yarn does not need scouring but should be added to the mordant. Fill old pan with just enough tap hot water to cover. Add mordant and stir. Add fabric and yarn. Soak for two hours. Rinse thoroughly.

Step 4: To dye five strips of fabric five shades of green, first add 10g of chlorophyllin powder to an old mixing jug or cup. Make into paste with hot water, then dilute until liquid. Fill an old pan with just enough hot water to cover your fabric and yarn. Heat to a simmer.

Gradients can be achieved by altering both dye strength and time left in the pan, so experiment with each.

For palest shade, add just 1/5th dye solution to pan, briefly dip first strip, rinse and iron dry to check shade (you can always re-dip to dye darker). For second shade, try leaving strip in pan for 15-30 mins. Keep adding more dye until the entire solution is in the pan.

The darkest shade of green can be cooked at a simmer for an hour. The white embroidery yarn can be dyed two shades of green. Rinse and dry all fabrics and yarn.



Step 5: Sew strips of fabric into gradient allowing 1cm seam allowance and iron open seams.

Step 6: Place stitched green fabric and denim together, wrong sides facing upwards and pin. Stitch around entire square perimeter with a 1cm seam allowance. Fold corners and turn to right side. Iron.

Step 7: Blanket stitch around outer edge in one shade of green and sew a running stitch around the heart in another.

