

Plant Pigments: Natural Dyes Activity



Historical Use

Today we go to the store to buy colorful clothes and fabric, but what about in the 1700s and 1800s? Back then, people would have had to make clothes by hand and even had to make the colors themselves! When looking at fashion in the past, you might see some bright colors from these handmade dyes. Until the 1850s, they were all made with materials found in nature that were experimented with, traded around the world, and used for fabrics and inks. Find out what sorts of colors plants make with your own plant pigment art!

Fun Craft Fact: Did you know sunflowers have been used for natural dyes?

A shade of red made with seeds from sunflowers was used for thousands of years by the Hopi Tribe! The seeds could also produce many shades of purple, blue, & black, making it a very useful plant to have.

Materials You'll Need

- White or light-colored pieces of paper or fabric (cotton works best; Make your own botanical pillowcase, napkin, or shirt!)
- Paper to protect the table or surface
- Wax paper
- Hammer, can, or heavy object
- Flowers, leaves, or grass

How to Create Your Own Plant Pigments Art

1. Go outside to gather different colored flowers, leaves, or grass to use for your plant pigment experiment! Then find a table or surface and lay some paper down to protect the surface.

2. Place your white or light-colored piece of paper or fabric down and arrange your plants in whatever pattern you like.



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3. Put a large piece of wax paper over your plant design and with the help of an adult, take the hammer, can, or any heavy object and gently hammer the plants through the wax paper until you start to see some colors stain the paper or fabric. Be sure not to crush the plants into pieces as you want to get a clean print of the plants.

4. Remove the wax paper and carefully remove all of the plants. Display your plant pigment artwork or try another design! Share your colorful designs with us at <social media or email>!

