



Cochineal

Cochineal is derived from the female *Dactylopius Coccus* which live on the Prickly Pear Cactus native to Mexico, Central and South America. Peru is the primary exporter of Cochineal exporting approx. 4000 metric tonnes a year. As a textile dye it has excellent light and washfastness. The dye matter in Cochineal is called Carminic Acid and is extremely strong so although it's a costly dye – a little goes a long way.

Cochineal produces a range of reds including fuchsia and purples. The colour of the dye changes depending on the PH of the dyebath and which mordants you use.

MORDANTING

Use Alum at 15% WOF for protein fibres.

Mordant with Tannin at 8% WOF then with Alum at 15% for cellulose fibres.

If you add Cream of Tartar at 6% WOF to the Alum mordant bath, you will get Christmas Reds.

If you add Iron at 2 – 4% WOF to the mordant bath you will get Purples.

Cochineal is very sensitive to PH - If you add Soda Ash to the dyebath you will get deep Fuchsias, if you add White Vinegar you will get Oranges.

DYEING

Use 3 – 8% WOF for medium depth of shade.

You can use the Cochineal powder straight or extract the colour by boiling it in a saucepan for 30 mins. This can be saved as a stock solution. Make sure you use a neutral soap to wash your fibre before dyeing as this will effect the colours you get.

Make up your dyebath with stock solution and mordanted fibre. Adjust the depth of shade with the amount of stock solution you use. Bring slowly up to the boil and continue dyeing until you are happy with the strength of colour. Rinse well in warm water. Unused dyebath can be saved and used at a later date.

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