



## Reliving History, Inc.

*Supporting the ca. 1751 Peter Burr House*

*The oldest wood frame house in West Virginia*

[www.RelivingHistoryInc.org](http://www.RelivingHistoryInc.org)

Contact us for upcoming events and to arrange presentations at your school or organization.

# Make Your Own Dyes and for fun color a pair of socks or a t-shirt

In colonial days, dyes were made from everyday materials and used for coloring fabrics and porous surfaces.

Many plants and organic substances would yield different colors.

One of the secret to making a good dye was to also use some kind of fixative to set the dye and make the colors permanent. These fixatives included acidic elements such as: human urine, alum, or vinegar.

The table to the right shows some materials that will produce certain colors.

Boiling the materials helped to bring out the colors.

Some materials (such as berries) did not need boiling but instead needed mashing and squeezing to get the colorful liquids out.

Boiling out the water helps to intensify the colors brighten colors in a more condensed state.

Dyes were boiled in big pots.

1. Boil for ½ hour as needed to extract as much color as desired.
2. Cool to room temperature.
3. Strain as needed to get out seeds, pulp, or other debris
4. To set the dye add a fixative (such as 1-2 teaspoons of white vinegar, alum, or human urine to about 3 cups of liquid).
5. Soak fabric or item to be colored in dye for ½ hour. The colors get darker the longer the item soaks in the dye.
6. Rinse the dyed item in clean water and wring out to dry.

### To get these colors:

**Blue – Light:** Try any of these:

- Logwood
- Red cabbage (1 c leaves, torn and loosely packed)
- Blue berries

**Brown:** Try Walnut shells/husks

**Brown - Reddish brown:** Try Red onions

**Brown - Golden brown:** Try Onion skin (1 c or about 2 onions' worth) loosely packed

**Orange:** Try Onion skin (1 c or about 2 onions' worth) loosely packed

**Pink:** Try any of these:

- Cranberries
- Canned beets – 1 c strained juice

**Purple:** Try any of these:

- Iris
- Blackberries
- Grape juice

**Purplish Red:** Try Poke berries

**Red:** Try Strawberry juice

**Yellow:** Try any of these:

- Turmeric – 1 t
- Marigolds
- Goldenrod
- Birch bark
- Poplar leaves
- Onion – outer skins (the more the brighter)

**Yellow – deep to burnt orange:** Try Yellow onions

Note: Different varieties of the above substances can yield a variety of shades and colors.

## Visit the Peter Burr House

170 E. Burr Blvd., Kearneysville, WV 25430

(at Burr Industrial Park in the far right back corner)

See website for directions: [www.RelivingHistoryInc.org](http://www.RelivingHistoryInc.org)