

## Notes on Dock as Dye Plant

(copied from no. 19 quarterly news)

The root and other parts of the plant of the common dock is a most useful dye. Not only is it absolutely fadeless but it is a very common and available at any time of the year. I was first introduced to it as a dye for raffia, and I was told that the method was American but I have never seen it in any book. It is also applicable to wool and silk.

The roots, the bigger the better, when dug up, cut into small pieces and dried. It keeps indefinitely. When required for use take a big double handful and soak it in water in which about a desert spoon of common washing soda has been dissolved, for about 24 hours. Then boil wool, silk or raffia in it until the required shade is obtained. This sounds a most drastic method but it succeeds and may be used with other dye plants.

With different mordants, with and without soda, a considerable variety of colours may be obtained from soft yellow, pink and brown, to darker shades varying with the amount of dye used and the length of time of boiling.

The potassium bi-chromate is used, the quantity generally given (1 ¼ oz to the pound) should be considerably increased according to the shade required. This is true for certain other dyes and chrome is a most useful mordant for varying shades.

It is impossible to describe the colours obtained from dock root but experiments are easy to make. Some idea may be obtained from the following table.

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| 1. Root soaked in soda and water.              | (clear colour)   |
| 1. Root soaked in soda only.                   | Soft yellow cinnamon or beige.                                   |
| 2. With alum.                                  | Darker pinky beige.  |
| 3. With Chrome.                                | Dusky pink, if boiled longer, redder, and later a browner shade. |
| 4. Alum, iron sulphate,<br>or copper sulphate. | A dull fawn grey.  |
| 2. Soaked in water only.                       | Little colour without mordant, a yellow brown.                   |
| 1. Alum.                                       | Yellow brown, straw colour or darker.                            |

*(This was taken from the S.W.& D. Guild Quarterly News of February 1937)*