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# NATURALLY DYEING EASTER EGGS

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There are as many ways to naturally dye an egg as there are to hard cook them. Here I offer a version using natural dye extracts. You can use either fresh or blown eggs. Experiment with your own color combinations!

What you will need

1. A dozen eggs (white or brown shells), or be bold and seek out quail eggs or other interesting poultry eggs.
2. Several quart Mason jars — one for each color you make
3. A large pot or canning kettle with jar rack. If you don't have a jar rack, a folded dish towel placed on the bottom of the kettle is a good substitute. You can set this up on your stove and transfer the dye jars into it as you fill them.
4. 1/4 cup of white distilled vinegar
5. 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
6. 1/2 teaspoon alum per dye bath. Alum is found in the spice section of the supermarket. If you are a natural dyer already, you should have this on hand. It's also available online.
7. Slotted spoon for lifting the eggs out of the hot dye solution
8. Rubber bands, masking tape or string for creating simple resist marks on the eggs

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## COOKING AND PREPARING THE EGGS

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If you are using blown eggs, skip this step but make sure they are clean and dry. Fill the large pot with water and add 1/4 cup vinegar. Carefully add the eggs and bring to a boil. Hold for 30 minutes at a low simmer. Let sit for 10 minutes, then cool the eggs by running cold water over them.

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## NATURAL DYE EXTRACT POWDERS AND LIQUIDS

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**FUCHSIA** - Cochineal extract — use about 1/4 teaspoon and dissolve in half a cup of boiling water. Add 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar. Add this dye solution to a mason jar, and add 1/2 teaspoon alum. Fill the jar about half full with cold water. Stir well and carefully place 2 or 3 eggs in the jar and place the jar in the canning kettle.

**BRICK OR BURGUNDY** - Madder extract — use about 1 teaspoon and dissolve in half a cup of boiling water. Add this dye solution to a mason jar, add 1/2 teaspoon alum and fill the jar about half full with cold water. Stir well and carefully place 2 or 3 eggs in the jar and place the jar in the canning kettle.

**DARK PURPLE** - Logwood extract — use about 1/4 teaspoon and dissolve in half a cup of boiling water. Add this dye solution to a mason jar, add 1/2 teaspoon alum and fill the jar about half full with cold water. Stir well and carefully place 2 or 3 eggs in the jar and place the jar in the canning kettle.

**ROSE** – Lac extract — use about 1 teaspoon of Lac extract and dissolve in 1/2 cup of cold water. Add this dye solution to a mason jar, add 1/2 teaspoon alum and fill the jar about half full with cold water. Stir well and carefully place 2 or 3 eggs in the jar and place the jar in the canning kettle.

**GOLD** – Fustic liquid extract — use about 1/2 teaspoon of Fustic extract and dissolve in 1/2 cup of cold water. Add this dye solution to a mason jar, add 1/2 teaspoon alum and fill the jar about half full with cold water. Stir well and carefully place 2 or 3 eggs in the jar and place the jar in the canning kettle.

**BROWN** – Dissolve 1 teaspoon ground walnut hulls or cutch dye in 1/2 cup boiling water. Add this dye solution to a mason jar, add 1/2 teaspoon alum and fill the jar about half full with cold water. Stir well and carefully place 2 or 3 eggs in the jar and place the jar in the canning kettle.

**BLUE** - Use either a standard indigo vat or Saxon Blue. For Saxon Blue, add a bit of soda ash to the Saxon Blue dye bath as its acidity weakens the eggshells. Use 1/2 teaspoon or more and add to a mason jar, fill halfway with water, stir well and carefully place 2 or 3 eggs in the jar. Place the jar in the canning kettle.

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## THE DYEING PROCESS

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Carefully lower the jar rack into the canning kettle. Add water to the kettle to bring the water level on the outside of the jars 2/3 up the side of the jar. If the jars start floating or moving, remove a little water. Turn on the heat and gradually bring the temperature up to a simmer. You may carefully rotate the eggs in the dye bath. Hold at a simmer for 1 hour. If you want darker colors, leave the eggs in the dye bath overnight.

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## DRYING AND FINISHING

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When the eggs are the shade that you want, carefully remove them from the dye bath with a slotted spoon and place on a rack to dry. The colors may be variegated or look textured, depending on the eggshell and the dye. Once they are thoroughly dry, rub them gently with a little olive oil to give them a glossier finish.



*Photo credits L-R: Two Men and a Little Farm, Botanical Colors*

Visit us at [botanicalcolors.com](http://botanicalcolors.com) for more information about Easter egg dyeing