

The NATURAL DYE EXTRACTS - 1

If the interest of using dye plants, dry or fresh, cannot be discussed, the use of dye plant extracts makes possible to take a step in the control of color and in the organization of productions.

Dry or fresh plants have been the bedrock of the immense know-how of ancient dyers and their beautiful productions. Much of the quality of these dyes rested on the control of the baths (so the extraction phase). The dyeing with plants is a recommended passage for the initiation and teaching of natural colors. It is a simple way for using natural color, sometimes playful and to create beautiful colors. Unfortunately, the constraints of using dry plants make their use hard to comply with current productions at larger scale - with few exceptions.

Throughout the so-rich history of natural colors, men have always tried to improve the colors, make their use or the organization of work of dyers and colorists easier. The coloring extracts are an integral part of this story.

Thus, the **first transformations** of dye-plants were carried out using macerations in water - at room temperature or by heating, by changing the acidity or the alkalinity, sometimes in the presence of mordants or by modification of the oxidation level, by exposing the plant to concentrated acids (garancin) or composting (walnut husk) for example. It would be too long to detail here the operations, often complex, operated on indigo plants (cocagnes, agranat, paste, pigment). All these natural colors of plants can be considered as the **1st generation of extracts**. The history of natural colors is punctuated by these extracts more or less old. For example, we have here a sample of a very old extract of weld.



As soon as we want to set up an organization of production, a search for quality and reproducibility, a better control of production costs, the extracts become obvious ... naturally.

With the revival of plant colors initiated in the 90s, a **second generation of extracts** appeared, heavily relying on available industrial techniques and technologies - we contributed to it. These extracts allow today developments and industrial applications. They are also used in a growing number of workshop on plant colors.

When will the **3rd generation of extracts** appear? Referring to the increasing demand in natural colors but also to the current evolutions of the uses and the practices of productions, no doubt that the 3rd - and innovating - generation of natural colors will come soon.

To be continued...

In the coming newsletters, we will develop others aspects related to the natural dye extracts, to their production, their use...