

# British Wool LEARNING



## DYEING WOOL WITH FOOD

Making dyes from fruits and vegetables makes an engaging art project and a fun, hands-on science activity. Nature is the original source of all the colours and dyes we use and people have been dyeing wool using vegetables throughout history. Using dyes is a fun way to show this to children. There are no blue, pink, yellow or red sheep roaming the fields of Britain but by creating dyes we can change the colour of wool.



You will find many alternative ways to create food dyes. The way we have chosen has been selected as a basic process to follow but it may not produce the best results if you are considering using your dyed wool for specific projects. The beetroot dye is not colourfast. It is bright and colourful which makes it an ideal dye to show as an example to children. The dyed yarn can be used for craft projects but washing the item will remove some or all of the colour.



You will find that different fibres absorb dye differently and various foods will produce a variety of colours.

**As this project requires boiling water, adult supervision is required.**

### YOU WILL NEED:

- Beetroot (or other)
- A pot or pan for boiling
- Salt and water
- Knife for chopping vegetables
- A bowl or large jar
- Light coloured wool

**1.** Dampen the light coloured yarn by rinsing it in water and then wringing it out well. This will help the dye to spread smoothly through the yarn.

**2.** Wash the beetroot to remove any dirt and cut into pieces. Once chopped, place the beetroot in a pot and cover it with water.

**3.** Bring the water to the boil and simmer for around 30 minutes. After boiling the cut vegetables, drain them through a colander into a container such as a bowl or large jar. This is your dye bath. Salt can be added to fasten the dye to the wool. This can help to make the colour stronger.



**4.** Add the yarn to the dye bath, agitate and cover. If using a jar, the lid is ideal. If using a bowl try cling-film or any cover that will reduce evaporation. Leave for a minimum of 3 hours. Overnight would be ideal.

**5.** Use tongs or spoons to remove the wool from the dye bath, drain and leave to dry. Outside on a dry day would be best but a warm corner indoors, with a bowl or bucket to collect any drips, could also be used.

**6.** This method can be used to test many types of foods to see how well they dye wool yarn. Try onion skins, blackberries, carrot, spinach or turmeric for example.



HAVE FUN!