

Egg Dyeing for Easter

From childhood, I remember decorating hen's eggs on the Saturday night in preparation for Easter Sunday's breakfast. In the kindergarten where I worked, we modified this - by using blown eggs on which the children would paint designs using tiny nailbrushes. The eggs were then threaded on wool and tied to a branch, making an Easter tree for decoration of the Easter Table.

Recently, while reading India Flint's book *Eco Colour*, I was delighted to see on page 162, 'Dyeing Easter Eggs in the Latvian Manner', and thought this would be a different activity for the Dye Group. Instead of using whole eggs I decided on blowing them so we could keep our masterpieces.



It was then that I discovered that white eggs were hard to find! I have since been advised that some delicatessens stock them or that you can find light coloured eggs if you search the packets on the supermarket shelf.

Method.

Make a small hole in each end using a needle, hat pin or nail.

Just gently tap the egg at the end until you make a small hole and then gradually enlarge it until big enough to blow the contents out. Repeat at other end - this is the hole you use to blow through. Break up the yolk with the hat pin since, if it remains whole, it is difficult to blow out.

After blowing the contents out, place egg under water and you can see the air coming out as the water enters the other hole. Give it a good shake and then blow out the water.

Have some plant material ready soaked in clear water: fine ferns or small flowers are good to use to make impressions on the egg's surface. Arrange in any pattern you like; they should stick if they are wet.

Next, completely wrap the egg in wet onion skins and secure by winding around thread or wrapping in open weave material such as an old stocking to secure the onion skins. Then put the excess onion skins into a small dye pot fill with water, place the wrapped egg in and hold it under the water level by putting a strainer or steamer on top.

Heat the dye bath until it boils and then simmer for half an hour. Leave cool in the liquid before removing wrappings to discover beautiful imprints and rich colour.

You can finish off your egg by painting with egg white – about 5 coats will give it a beautiful sheen and then you can thread, using buttons or beads to cover the holes, and hang or else you can glue a bead over the hole and put it into a dish.

I hope you re discover the child within as you dye your eggs.

Happy Easter

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