



HISTORY & METHODS OF PLANT DYES



Colorful dyes extracted from plants



Centuries ago, there were three types of natural dyes: vegetable or plant dyes, mineral dyes and insect or animal dyes.

- For over 4000 years, mankind has been brightening up clothing with natural and synthetic dyes. Different colors add individuality to clothing and has been used to denote gender, status and allegiance. It started with natural mineral and plant dyes, but with the discovery of synthetic dyes came a plethora of color choices.
- When the first humans created clothes made from linseed and cotton, the need for dyeing was absent. All the garments were used in their natural color, which was something close to pale grey or white. Centuries later, in the Middle East, Egypt and Asia, the need to distinguish gender and class became more pronounced and so the first natural dyes were created.
- The dyes that were used for garments were proportionate to the wealth or importance of the people. Wealthy people were wearing brightly hued colours, while the lower class was wearing clothes in the shades of white or brown. The slaves' clothes were dyed in greys, greens and browns. Either way, dyed garments were expensive and a matter of exclusivity, across the whole ancient world.



FUN FACT: LEVIS INDIGO BLUE JEANS

Plant: Indigofera tinctoria



Indigo dye



Indigo Blue Jeans

- The original Levis Blue Jeans were made with a plant dye, extracted from the True Indigo plant in 1873. It's a very expensive and laborious dyeing process that was later replaced with the cheaper blue synthetic dye. Natural Indigo dye is making a come back in blue jeans, but you will have to pay a pretty penny!
- In the 1800s, in the time of the Gold Rush, American gold miners needed clothes that were strong, lasted longer and did not tear easily. Levi Strauss, a businessman, and Jacob Davis, a tailor, supplied miners with denim pants that were made from durable material and reinforced with rivets at the places where pants tended to tear which prolonged life of pants.
- Levis blue jeans became widely popular in the 1930s when Hollywood started making cowboy movies in which actors wore jeans. With the beginning of the World War 2, American soldiers started wearing them when they were on the leave. Young people started wearing denim in the 1950s – a mean of rebellion. This fashion was also inspired by Marlon Brando with his 1953 film “The Wild One” as well James Dean’s movie “Rebel Without a Cause” from 1955.



WHAT IS FLOWER POUNDING?



Designing flower layout on sachet



*Flowers and leaves pounded
into a mandala design*

- “Tataki zome” is the Japanese art of transferring botanical dyes from flowers and leaves onto fabric by simply hammering them onto the surface. A leaf is taped to fabric then hammered with a mallet until its chlorophyll creates a stain in the shape of that leaf.
- It’s also know as flower pounding, leaf bashing and sometimes refereed to as Hapa Zome. (The name "Hapa Zome" came from an artist getting the name wrong. Now it's more widely used than Tataki zome which is the correct name for it.)
- The Cherokee and other Native American tribes used to decorate their tents and leather goods with a leaf pounding technique. They would also pound and sew pressed leaves into quilts.