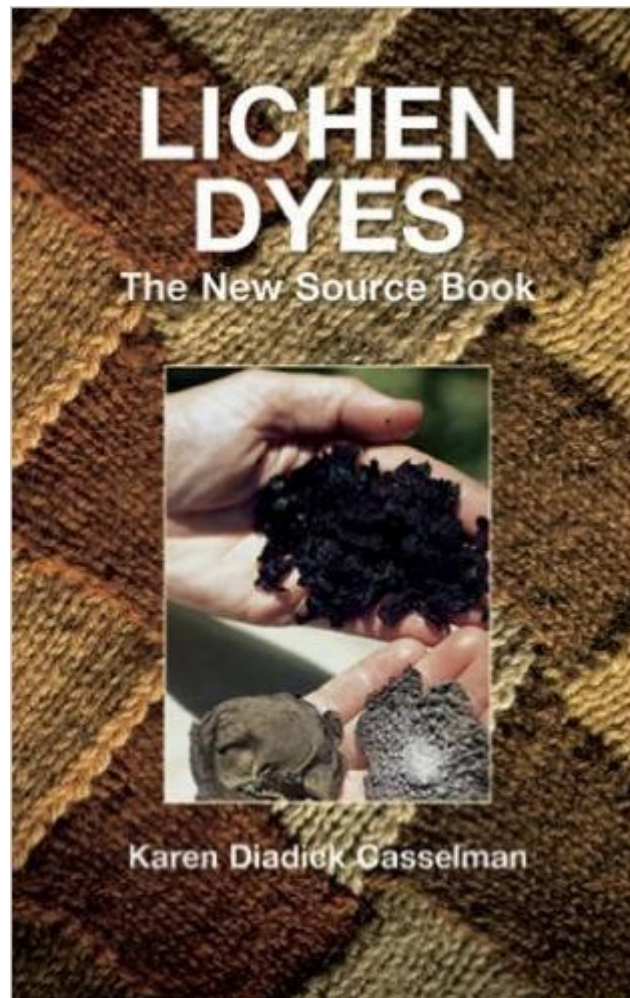


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Lichen Dyes: The New Source Book



Synopsis

Lichens are curious plants, composed of fungi and algae that often resemble splotches of paint peeling from rocks or wood. They have been used to create brilliant, versatile dyes for over 4,000 years. In this comprehensive guide based on 25 years of meticulous research, noted textile designer and lichen expert Karen Casselman explains how to create and use dyes derived from these unusual plants. The text begins with a fascinating history of such Asian and European lichen pigments as Phoenician purple, Roman murex, Florentine orchil, and Norwegian korkje.

Consideration of Scottish, Irish, and Scandinavian domestic lichen dyes follows, as well as those used in colonial America. Also discussed at length are safe dyeing methods, with special attention to equipment and preparation of the fiber; ecologically sound dyeing techniques and the use of mordants (substances used to fix dyes); lichen identification; and more. A final section includes charts of lichen dye names and ingredients, additives and alternative mordants, international field guides, useful bibliographies, indices, and other information. Well written, informative, and filled with expert advice, this excellent guide will be indispensable to novices and experienced dyers who wish to learn the age-old art and craft of dyeing with lichens.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a decent guide to dying with lichens. It is a very condensed presentation of the author's academic and practical research on the topic over many years. In terms of topics considered, the book is quite varied. It begins with a preface on ethical collecting of lichens. Next comes 10 common

questions about dying with lichens covering such topics as "Will lichen dyes fade?", "How many lichens does it take to dye something?", and "How can I avoid collecting rare lichens by mistake?". Following this are short chapters on the history of lichen dyes in Asian, European, and American cultures. Then there is a very practical chapter describing in detail methods and recipes for lichen dyes, together with a list of common lichens used for dyes, grouped by dye method, and specifying final colors that can be achieved. One of the author's pet topics is ecodyeing, and she has developed techniques for dying that are less harmful to the environment than traditional methods, and she devotes a chapter to describing some of her alternatives. The last full chapter covers ethics of lichen dying and lichen identification. The book ends with a 15 page annotated bibliography. There is also an index. The only photographs in the book are the ones printed inside the front and back covers. Overall, I found this book to be clear and very well researched. I'm quite fond of lichens, but I have no background in the dyeing field. The author seems to forget how little some of her readers, such as myself, may know about natural dyes. She uses words like "mordant" without definition. Certainly, if you are already an experienced dyer, such words and their corresponding concepts will already be familiar to you.

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