

COLORS TO DYE FOR

Like food and shelter, clothing is a basic need. Long ago people had to supply their own needs. Finished cloth was too costly. Much time was spent making their own cloth. They were just like us. They wanted fabric of different colors.

In early times cloth dyeing was an important craft. People got fibers from flax. Flax is a plant. Fibers also came from sheep. This is called wool. Cotton is also a natural fiber. All these fibers were a plain color. All of these fibers look alike. People wanted to have more color. Dye is used to add color. There were no dyes to buy. People had to make their own dye. People had to use their natural resources. They found they could use plants to make dye. Plants made good dyes for fabric. This was one way people of long ago conserved. They used what they had.

There were many different plants to use. Iris dyed cloth a soft blue color. Goldenrod made fibers yellow. Berries were used for purples and reds. Different parts of the plants were used, too. Leaves, flowers, and the roots were all used to make dyes. The part they used was mashed or peeled. Then it was put into a pot of hot water. The fabric or fibers were put into the hot dye. Then they let it sit. The color would get darker and darker. When it was ready, they hung it out to dry. A lot of time was spent on coloring fabric. Dyeing cloth was an important art in early times.

Dyed cloth made fabrics beautiful. It made colorful quilts. Color was another way they could make quilts symmetrical. Color made quilts more artful. Colorful quilts were easily traded for other goods. Buying and trading color quilts added style to their homes.



