SINGING THE BLUES: Working with *Persicaria tinctoria*

With John Marshall©

Reduction Vat with Fructose

[This is the official recipe, and a bit more complicated than presented in class. The simplified class version works just fine.]

Supplies:

one part indigo pigment (100*g*)

two parts calcium hydroxide [pickling lime/calx] (200*g*)

three parts fructose (300*g*)

white vinegar 20*ml*

Directions:

① Place 100g indigo pigment in a ceramic mortar and pulverize with a pestle. Gradually blend in 150*ml* of water until you have a smooth paste. Transfer to another bowl, cover and let sit overnight.

② Prepare your yardage (wash ahead of time).

③ Transfer ① to a large container and gradually mix in 10*l* of 50° C hot water. Stir well.

④ Add 300*g* of fructose to ③ while stirring briskly with a whisk.

⑤ Mix 200*g* of calx with enough warm water to make a slurry, stir until all lumps are gone.

⑥ Add calx slurry to ④ and continue mixing.

⑦ Keep on stirring until you start to feel some resistance. Place the container in a pan of hot water and let it aside for about an hour, stirring occasionally, at which point it should be fully reduced and ready to use as your stock solution.

⑧ Prepare your vat container by adding 2*l* of ⑦ to 75*l* of very warm water. Stir well. The vat should have a pH of around 11.

⑨ Measure out 2ℓ of the stock solution from ⑦ and add to ⑨. Stir well. The vat should have a pH of 10 to 11. Allow to sit for an hour or two until a thin film of blue forms on top and the liquid below the film is no longer blue.
⑩ Gently submerge the fiber in the vat and gently swish if appropriate.

⑪ Remove the fiber, rinse, gently wring, and hang upon a laundry rod until dry.

⑫ Repeat steps ⑪ and ⑫ until you achieve the color you long for, or, shy of that, whatever depth of color you can get before calling it a day.
⑬ Add 20 ㎖ of white vinegar to 60ℓ of water. Soak your dyed yardage in this mild acidic solution to neutralize the effects of the alkaline dye bath. This is more important to do when using protein fibers. Rinse in fresh water, gently wring out, and hang once more to dry.
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