



TEXTILE DYES FROM RENEWABLE RESOURCES

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The purpose of this research was to explore the viability of using plants currently growing in Manitoba as a source of natural dyes for textile fibers. Some of these plants have been documented in botanical sources as dye sources, but how "good" they are had not been systematically tested or documented.

The southeastern part of the province of Manitoba was chosen because it is an incredibly diverse and rich area in plant life. Plant samples were collected, dye (if any) was extracted, and test fabrics were dyed. The performance of the naturally dyed fabric was tested using AATCC methods for light, wash, and crocking fastness. Only 40 plants were collected and tested, but a complete color spectrum except red was obtained.

One of the criticisms of natural dyeing is the large amount of plant material needed and the corresponding amount of land that would be removed from food production if we returned to natural dyeing for commercial use. By using plants that grow on sub-marginal land, this argument is neutralized. The study area is noted for under-employment. Most residents work less than 10 weeks a year in seasonal occupations (trapping, tree planting). Perhaps it may encourage the establishment of small-scale enterprises for rural families in an area where sustainable development is sorely needed. This project was funded by the University of Manitoba (URGP).