DYED IN THE WOOL

around your outstretched fingers in a figure-eight and tie loosely in two spots with a short piece of yarn.

The next day, boil up your plants or kitchen scraps to extract the dye. For the small amounts of yarn you are going to dye, you only need a couple of handfuls of dyestuffs for each color. Put the plants and a little water into another old pot. Simmer for about 30 minutes. Strain the dye and put it back into the pot with enough cold water to cover the yarn you are dyeing.

You'll get the best results if you first mordant your wool to make it fade-resistant. Alum is one of the most common chemicals used as a mordant. The day before you plan on dyeing (or well before, in which case let the mordanted wool dry), fill an old pot with enough water to cover all the yarn, and add 4 ounces of alum mixed with 1 ounce cream of tartar. Bring to a boil and cook for one hour. Let cool overnight in the mordant bath.

Place the pot on the stove. Poking the yarn gently with a spoon, cook until it turns the shade you want (remember the yarn will look lighter when it's dry). Let the yarn cool in the pot. Rinse it with cool water until the rinse water runs clear. Gently squeeze the yarn and hang it to dry in a shady spot.

Here are some plants you can use as dyestuffs. Using alum as the mordant, these are the colors they yield.

Dandelion flowers—Yellow
Elderberries—Violet
Marigolds—Yellow-tan
Nettles—Greenish yellow
Red onion skins—Reddish orange
Yellow onion skins—Yellow to burnt orange

Make the belts described on pages 145 and 146 from yarn that you've dyed yourself using natural dyes. Natural dyes yield subtle colors quite different from chemical dyes. The process is easy to do and a lot of fun.

Gather a variety of dyestuffs, from your kitchen as well as from outdoors. Onion skins, herbs and spices, nutshell, and vegetables such as beets all yield dyes, as do flower blossoms, the leaves, berries, and bark of trees, and lichen. If you divide a skein of wool (use 100 percent wool, because it takes dye better than cotton or synthetic fibers) into small hanks, you can experiment with all sorts of dyestuffs and have plenty of different colored yarn on hand to weave, knit, and craft with. To form hanks, wind some yarn

Look for alum at your local pharmacy. Cream of tartar can be found in the spice section of your supermarket.