

Make Your Own Stains By Pattie Bagley

Several years ago I was told by Patti Simmons that she made her own stain with ammonia and acorns. She said that she would gather gallons of acorns, break them with a hammer, put them into old pantyhose and submerge them in ammonia for a couple of weeks. She said that the ammonia kept her stain from getting slimy and moldy like similar stains made with plain water often do. I suspect that there is also some chemical reaction going on that aids with color but that wasn't covered in the 45 minutes I spent in Chemistry Class. I have followed Patti's directions for several years and often make stains from acorns and the green hulls of black walnuts.

I wondered if this would work for other plant matter and thought that our theme of Weaving Green was a good excuse to experiment.

I don't often wear panty hose so when I tried Patti's formula I decided to simply pack a jar with chopped acorns or black walnut hulls, cover them with plain ammonia (not sudsy ammonia), put a lid on it and then strain it through a cheese cloth when the stain was finished. That's the process I used for this experiment.

I numbered each of my sample baskets to make it easier to track the stains.

They are:

1. **Acorns** – These particular acorns are from a Burr Oak. They are large so I didn't have to bend over as much to collect them
2. **Green Azalea Seed Pods** – I chopped these.
3. **Green Holly Berries** – Red ones work also.
4. **Avocado Seeds** – After eating the avocados, I sliced the seeds.
5. **Rose Hips** – The new Knockout Roses have tons of blooms and thus tons of Rose Hips. I chopped these.
6. **Green Pecan Hulls** – I removed these before the pecans were fully ripe & chopped them.



Some things that don't work at all are Red Dogwood Seeds and Vidalia Onions. I sure that there are many things in my yard that would make beautiful stains but I just haven't tried them yet. Usually, the color starts to become evident within a few minutes. If it took longer than a couple of days, I gave up.

A warning – While ammonia is a naturally occurring chemical compound, it can be dangerous if used in enclosed areas so if you decide to try this, please have adequate ventilation.

As soon as the stain is exposed to the air, the ammonia starts to evaporate and the smell is gone long before it's dry.

Now, all of this may not make a huge difference in your weaving repertoire but it might be something you'd like to experiment with. Suppose you make a basket for your gardener friend and stain it with rose hips. Or you might make a tortilla basket for your sister who makes great Mexican food and the stain you put on it is made from avocado seeds. You've got to agree, that's just too cool.