

COMMON WEAL COMMUNITY ARTS

Artful Isolation Activities

Week Seventeen: Marigold Summer with Melanie Monique Rose



Melanie Monique Rose is a fibre and visual artist from Treaty 4 Territory. She uses felting techniques on collected blankets to create a canvas exploring her Métis and Ukrainian heritage. Personal, cultural, and universal symbolism are woven into the fabric of Melanie's work with an emphasis on movement, colour, and narrative. She is currently exploring natural colour to create dyes and paints derived from flowers and plants. You can find her on instagram at [@melaniemoniquroseart](https://www.instagram.com/melaniemoniquroseart).

This activity is possible thanks to a partnership with the Heritage Community Association in Regina, Saskatchewan.



Create cloth dyes with flowers you forage from your yard or neighbourhood!

What is Marigold Summer? Marigold Summer is an invitation to create natural cloth dyes with marigolds and other flora foraged from your backyard or neighbourhood. After foraging, you'll use resist techniques similar to tie-dyeing to prepare your cloth for its flower bath.

Why Marigold Summer? Melanie created this activity to encourage folks to be inspired by the "flower power" that surrounds us, using the abundance that's available in our local outdoor spaces. In her own words: "Ignite the creativity that is offered through the marigold! A marigold is often called "the herb of the sun" and represents passion and creativity. I recommend this activity for sunchasers, witches and wizards, gardeners, healers, artists, and anyone looking to try something new."

Suitable For: All Ages (note that wee ones will need support).

What You'll Need: Marigold flowers, kitchen scale, calculator, alum, tannin (rhubarb leaves), water, large pot, non-synthetic fibre to dye (cotton, wool, silk, bamboo) such as a t-shirt or scarf, large stirring spoon, and a fine strainer. Optional: Elastics, needle and thread, marbles, rocks, popsicle sticks, rubber gloves, and mortar and pestle.

Getting Ready:

- Gather materials from your yard or neighbourhood! Be sure to ask permission before harvesting from a neighbouring garden. You can collect marigolds that are fading out of bloom by pinching or cutting off the flower stem below the spent flower and just above the first set of leaves. Let them dry by hanging them in a dry room with good airflow.
- Consider what you'd like to dye. Is there something that you own that can be reimagined, such as a tired old white shirt, scarf, or napkin set? Note that natural dyes work best on natural materials such as wool, silk, cotton, and linen.
- [Maiwa](#) is a great resource for all your natural dyeing needs! Melanie recommends reviewing this [Guide to Natural Dyes](#) before beginning.
- Explore Shibori dyeing techniques [here](#) and [here](#). How will you incorporate these techniques into your project?



Activity:

- If your fabric is new, wash it and let it dry. Weigh your dry fabric and record this number. A kitchen scale works great. This is called the Weight of Fabric (WOF). You'll need this number to help measure some of your materials.
- Mordant your fabric to prepare it for dyeing (this helps dye to "stick" to the fabric). If you're using a protein fibre like wool or silk, mordant with alum only. For cellulose fibre like cotton or linen, mordant first with tannin, then with alum. Note that tannin can be purchased at [Maiwa](#) or found in nature (such as in rhubarb leaves). Details on how to prepare your mordant can be found [here](#).
- Bundle your mordanted fabric using resist techniques (such as those outlined in the instructional links above). For Melanie's project she placed a rock onto the fabric and tied an elastic around it. Wherever you've placed string and elastics a "resist" will be formed which will not allow dye to penetrate, thus creating beautiful marks and pattern. Put fabric aside for now.
- Marigold dye creates vibrant yellows, green-yellows, and oranges with a ratio of 25% dried marigold to WOF. So, if your fabric weighs 250g (WOF), you'll want to use 62.5g of marigolds ($250 \times .25 = 62.5$). Once measured, add dried flowers (aka: dyestuff) to a pot, then cover with water and simmer for a half hour to extract the colour. Strain the dye liquid, removing the dyestuff.
- Put fabric and dye liquid into a pot, adding enough water to cover fabric entirely. Simmer until the desired shade is achieved.
- Unwrap your bundle, rinse, and enjoy!

Reflection:

- There are many flowers around us that give colour to cloth. Consider experimenting with different flowers. Melanie recommends goldenrod and hollyhocks. Remember to record your experiments so that you can problem solve or recreate desired results.
- Share your photos with us via Facebook or Instagram, tagging [@skcommonweal](#) and using the hashtags [#cwflowerpower](#) and [#cwneighbours](#).