

## To wash or not to wash

March/April 2023 Weavers Bazaar Newsletter asked for customers' experience of using Weavers Bazaar yarn for hand dyeing. While learning about natural dyeing I used whatever natural colour wool yarns I had to hand. Recently, I ordered a large amount of Weavers Bazaar worsted yarn heavy weight 5/2NM (2/4WC) wpc 9, wpi 24 undyed mixed fleece.

The question about whether washed or unwashed WB undyed yarn made any difference to the uptake of natural dyes was rather timely before I start a summer of natural dyeing. For the experiment I used some stock walnut dyestuff I had left over from last year. Walnut is a substantive dye so no mordant needed prior to dyeing. I used 25g of the yarn (6 skeins) and 50g of dyestuff. This gave a ratio of 2:1 dyestuff to yarn by weight.

Three of the skeins were washed in hand hot water with an easily available liquid wool wash then rinsed in tepid water followed by a cold rinse. The washed and unwashed skeins were steeped in tepid water for 1hr 30mins then squeezed before adding to the dyebath which was brought up to the boil slowly and then left to simmer at 80°C. A washed and unwashed skein was removed from the dyebath at 10min, 20min and 30min. They were rinsed with tepid water followed by a cold rinse, squeezed and left to dry. The result can be seen below.



In conclusion: the yarn does bloom with washing and during the natural dyeing process; there is no visible difference in the uptake of dyestuff between washed and unwashed skeins at 10, 20 or 30 minutes.

Margaret Volante 24 April 2023