THE ART OF BOTANICAL DYEING

DAYS OF DAHLIA

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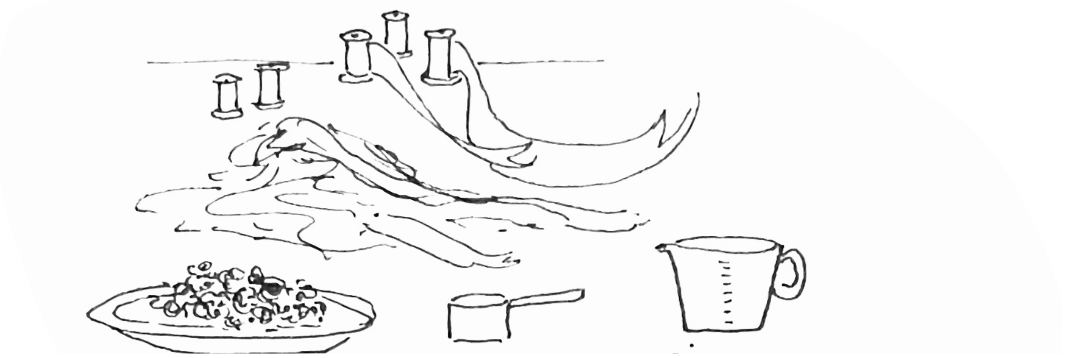
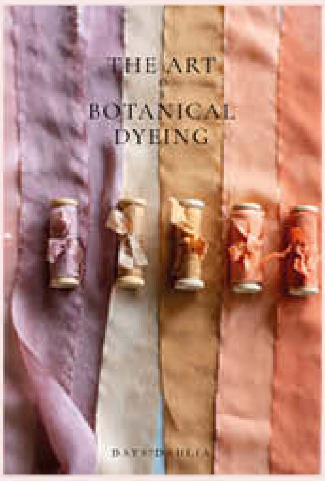


Layers of colours, fabrics, seasons, and stories.



THE ART
BOTANICAL
DYEING

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO BOTANICAL DYEING.

THE SCOPE OF THE BOTANICAL PALETTE

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COLOUR CHANGING ABILITY

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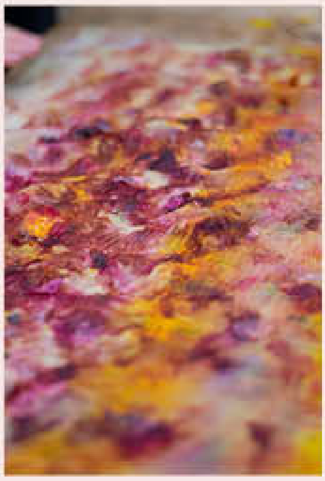

MODIFIERS.

METHODS FOR APPLYING MODIFIERS

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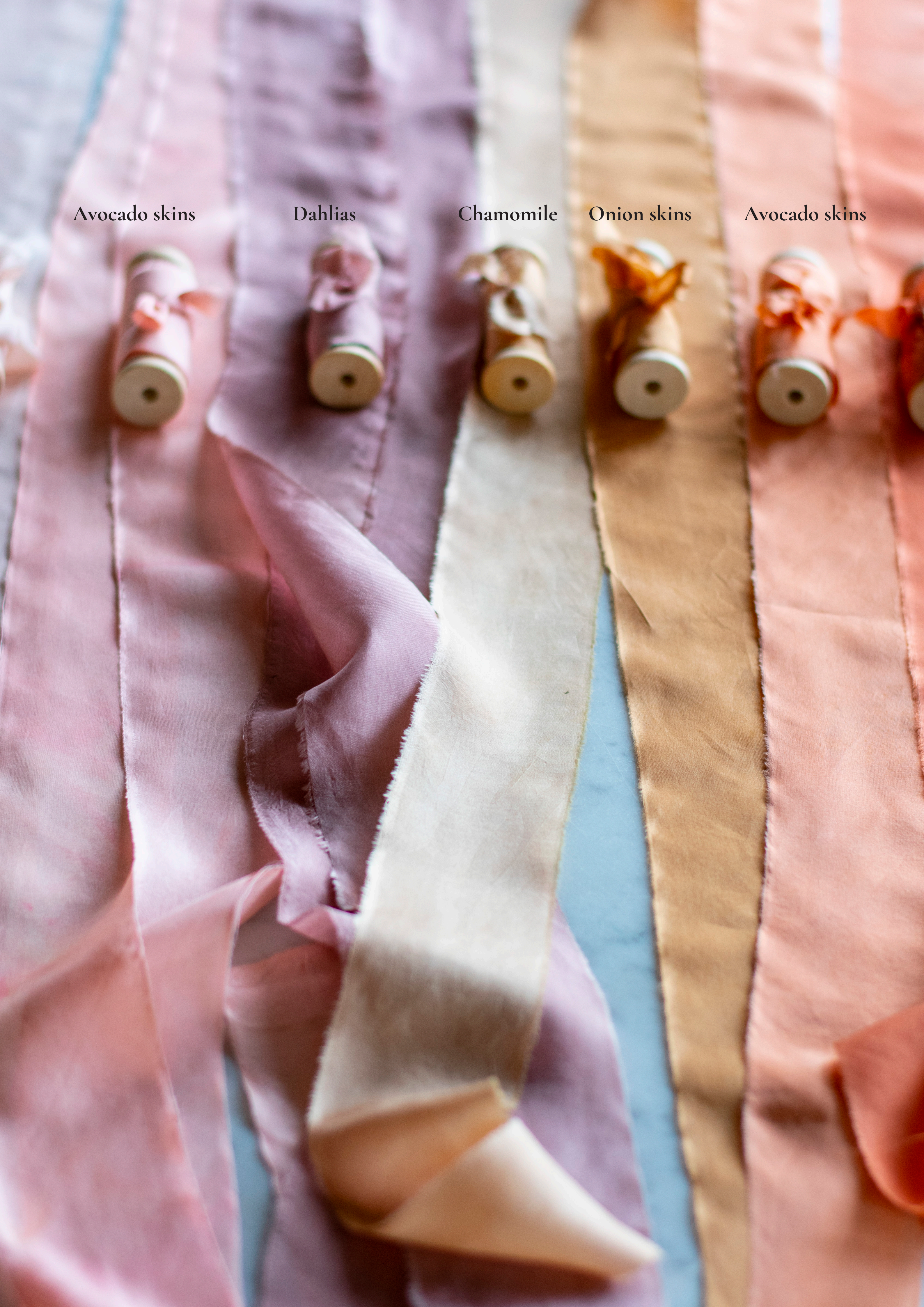
Avocado skins
Dahlias
Chamomile
Onion skins
Avocado skins

The Art of Botanical Dyeing is a book by Days of Dahlia written over a decade of developing a collaborative botanical dye practice alongside growing flowers and seasonal floristry.

In this beautifully illustrated and informative guide, you will explore the art of extracting colour from whole botanical materials; from leaves, flowers, roots, and bark, from garden plants, foraged material, and everyday kitchen scraps. Rather than working with synthetic bought dyes, this book encourages you to develop a deeper, more intuitive relationship with plants and flowers, and the colours they contain.

You will discover how natural fibres respond to botanical colour, the role of mordants, tannins, and modifiers, and the many variables that influence a dye bath. This book is an invitation to experiment, observe, and learn what happens when you dabble in the exciting chemistry of plants, fibres, minerals, and metals.

Alongside the practical process of botanical dyeing, the book explores a deeper idea: colour as a form of memory. A series of dyed fabrics with flowers from spring, summer, autumn, and winter becomes an archive of place and season; a physical record of people, plants, weather, landscape, and time.

Whether you are completely new to botanical dyeing or looking to develop your practice with grown and found materials, this book will encourage you to work with what you have, embrace the unexpected, expand your creativity, and find your own palette of colour.

CREATING YOUR OWN DYE STUDIO.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Botanical dyeing is a wonderfully hands-on practice, but before you begin filling your dye pots, take some time to prepare your dye studio. The more organised you are, the more freedom you will have to experiment. A dedicated space also makes it much easier to experiment, keep track of what you are doing, record your results, and work efficiently and safely.

CREATE A DEDICATED WORKSPACE

Always keep your dyeing activities and equipment separate from your kitchen. Although many botanical dyestuffs are edible, a dye bath is not the same as something prepared for eating. Dye materials, mordants, modified fibres, and dyeing equipment can introduce substances that you would not want to come into contact with food.

For this reason, we recommend having a dedicated dye studio or dyeing area, including a separate heat source and equipment that is used only for dyeing. Do not use your everyday cooking pots, utensils, measuring equipment or food storage containers for dyeing, and do not return dyeing equipment to food preparation afterwards.

You do not need a large or elaborate studio. A small, well-ventilated space with a washable work surface, access to water, and a portable electric hob is enough to get started. A utility room, workshop, shed, or well ventilated outbuilding can all work beautifully. You can even work outside in the garden.

The most important thing is to create a clear boundary between your dyeing materials and anything [illegible].

WORK WITH NATURAL FIBRES

Botanical dyes have an affinity with natural fibres, but different fibres require different preparation and dyeing methods. Wool and silk are protein fibres (from animals), while cotton and linen are cellulose fibres (from plants). They do not all absorb natural dyes in the same way, and a dye process that works beautifully on wool may produce a very different result on linen.

Before beginning a project, think about the fibre you are working with and follow the appropriate preparation and mordanting process. For your first experiments, it can be helpful to work with small samples of fabric rather than a whole length of material or garment. This allows you to experiment without using large quantities of plant material, water, or fabric.

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