

October 2016 – Volume 14

It's *That* Time of Year Again – Already!

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“Weaving in the Sunshine State” Basket Weaving Retreat

www.weavinginthesunshinestate.com

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Also, COLOR MY WORLD – and MY REED TOO with Rit Dyes

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Patterns Available on my Website or in my Etsy shop.

Please remember that when viewing the newsletter from your computer, that clicking on anything shown in blue will link you directly to the correct website referenced.

Wow! Where has this year flown by too? No need to fret or anything, but it's only 86 days until Christmas. I make myself a promise every year to be done with my shopping by the end of November. So that is only 61 days. I need to get started!

But October is more officially the start of this season ...



Are you ready for it? And chances are you have at least one scheduled.

Some thoughts & tips to consider:

- *Juried vs. Non-Juried – Avoid flea market environments.
- *Booth Fees & Anticipated Attendance – A higher booth rental fee does not always equal high attendance.
- *Inventory – Do you have enough to present a good display?
- *Share a booth (and expenses) with a weaving friend.
- *Booth Display – Have a visually appealing display that is full but not too crowded. Use risers or vertical displays too. Show how the baskets can be used with staging them for their use.
- *Weather – An indoor venue is safest - outdoors is more fun!
- *Do a “Dress Rehearsal”. I read this somewhere ... “Practice setting up on one leg, blindfolded, in a rainstorm with a howling wind.” You WILL experience difficulties – indoors or out. Know your plan and your booth layout in advance.
- *Most Important - Keep a Sense of Humor – It will relax you and those around you. Smile even when you get odd comments from customers. And I've had some doozies :o)



Wow! It looks like we are going to have about 70 attendees at the first Weaving in the Sunshine State basket weaving retreat! Isn't that fantastic?!? I'm so excited to meet you all and weave together in south Florida. We'll be warm while those up north are experiencing the cold of winter.

Registration is continuing until all classes are full and there's no space left. So if you haven't mailed yours yet, you need to! For details of the event, a class catalog and schedule, and a registration form, go to www.weavinginthesunshinestate.com, which will link you to my website blog.

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I Know You are Just Dyeing to Know

First off, I have to admit ... I have only been weaving baskets since 2012. That's a babe (I don't often have the opportunity to use that word when referring to myself - for a LOT of reasons - and didn't want to miss an opportunity) in the world of basket weavers. I am a jack (Jill) of many trades and a master of none as they say. But I am most definitely not afraid to try something new. So why was I so hesitant to try to dye my own reed? Hmmmm. Pondering that for a moment and I'll count the reasons. 1) The MESS. I'm a bit OCD (OK, a lot) and I do not like messes. 2) Failure. Who's a fan of failure? Not me. 3) Lack of proper equipment. Surely it takes a lot of stuff? 4) You can just buy it and be done with it. Sure you can ... at two to three times the price of natural reed.

Well, I woke up one morning recently and decided "today is the day". No pre-planning. Nada. Just do it, as the Nike commercial says. First on the agenda ... call a friend. Who wants to have a potential life changing event without at least a witness? And that was how my day began and my forever future thoughts about dyeing my own reed changed.

I'm a researcher by nature. And the internet has a plethora of information out there. So, I had done some digging and the main thing I had found was ... there's no one, single perfect method that is generally practiced. There are TONS of them. And if you ask ten "experts", chances are you are going to get ten expert opinions that are different. So I'm going to save you some effort and gather a compilation of those ideas about the "perfect dye method". Because you really have GOT to try this. We'll walk through the process in baby steps.

You are going to need some dye (duh). Option One - Basket Tree™ makes a powdered dye formulated for reed. It's sold in 1/3 oz. packages and dyes up to one pound of reed and comes in many colors. Option Two - Rit® dye is readily available in most any big box, hobby, and even some dollar stores. It comes in both powdered and liquid forms. And it comes in a tremendous amount of colors. Their website (www.ritstudio.com) has so many tips and ideas on it. Plus, there are instructions for blending their bottled or packaged colors to create new ones. I decided on Option Two and bought four bottles of liquid Rit dye.

How much reed you are going to dye will determine what equipment you will need. Here's a basic listing.

- 1) Heat Source - While you could use your kitchen stove, I don't recommend it (unless you are exceptionally tidy or are really looking for a reason to replace your aging countertops or never did like the flooring you picked out). Many BBQ grills have a side burner. Other options would be a turkey fryer with propane bottle, an electric burner, or a camp stove. I had access to a BBQ grill side burner outside. Perfect.
- 2) Vessels to Heat Water - If you plan to dye your reed in that vessel, then choose a big and deep one that is non-reactive such as stainless steel or enamel coated. On my initial dyeing attempt, I had one beat up large roasting pan and a quite large stainless steel bowl. I can work with that to start with.
- 3) Gloves and Aprons - Pretty obvious you are going to get dye on you so plan ahead. I whipped out my Playtex rubber gloves and they worked fine. I wore a tie dyed shirt in lieu of an apron just to honor the day.
- 4) Tongs, Stirrers, Measuring Cups/Spoons - Please keep in mind that these dyes are NOT food safe and anything you choose to use should not go back into your kitchen. A good pair of nice long tongs to remove the reed from the dye water, stirrers to dissolve the dye in the water, and cups/spoons to measure the dye if blending or using less than an entire package.

- 5) Rinse Water Vessel – After dyeing your reed, it will need to be rinsed. A plastic tub or dishpan works well.
- 6) Drying Rack – A coat tree, rack, swing set, or scraggly tree with branches will work. Anything to let the loosely coiled reed dry. We chose to use a tarp on a slight hillside and just throw the reed onto it. I read a comment from someone to let it dry in the shade. Direct sunlight is not dyed reed's best friend.
- 7) Mordant – The definition of mordant is ... a substance, typically an inorganic oxide, that combines with a dye or stain and thereby fixes it in a material. More on this in a bit.
- 8) Fixative – The definition of a fixative is ... a chemical substance used to preserve or stabilize. More on this later.

OK ... let's do this! But please keep in mind that there are lots of ways to do this – and by the pictures I've seen, there are many *successful* ways to do this.

We put the water on to boil on the BBQ grill side burner – just water, no dye or anything else added. Since this was the first try, the decision to dye a small amount of reed was made and we used one gallon of water. Once the water was boiling, it was poured into the dye vessel (the pan or bowl). I decided to use a good amount of regular old table salt which I stirred in until it was completely dissolved – let's guess probably ¼ cup since I didn't measure. I then added ½ cup of liquid RIT dye (for one gallon water) and stirred well. And then I tossed in the reed and put a cover on it to let it steep in the hot water for 30 minutes. We flipped the reed and stirred it around several times during the dye process.

While the reed was dyeing, the rinse bath was prepared. I happened to have some Retayne on hand which is generally known as a "fixative". We used a couple gallons of rinse water and a few tablespoons of Retayne.

It was pretty exciting to pull that first batch of dyed reed from the hot bath and place it in the rinse! Wow, what great color we had! After letting the reed set in the Retayne for 30 more minutes, voila, it was finished. We threw it out on our drying tarp and let it dry in the shade.



I'm sharing this picture just so you know that this process isn't a fancy schmancy deal. Yes, a lot was learned from this virgin experience and it was determined that better – and bigger – vessels were needed. But the rest pretty much worked.

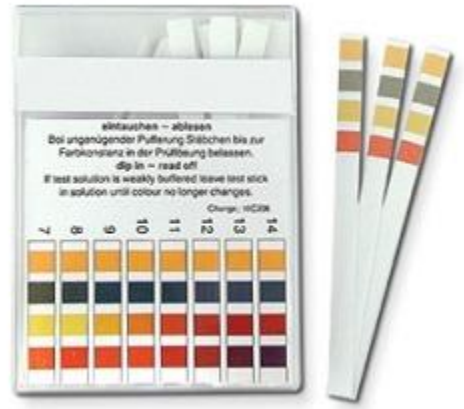
And I know you are just "dyeing" to see the finished reed that is ready for weaving? Well here you go.



The reed colors in order are straight from the Rit liquid dye bottles – no mixing for a new color – Teal, Aubergine, Fuschia, and Aquamarine.

Aren't you impressed with the saturated and rich colors? And when weaving this newly dyed reed, there was ZERO bleeding on hands or adjacent natural reeds. I think I may be hooked on this :o)

A little more information about mordants and fixatives might be needed. There are plenty of weavers who do not use *anything* in their dye water. Technically, the dye process is probably most affective in “neutral” water so if you are getting funky results, get some test strips from Lowe’s or Home Depot and check your water.



For high pH – you can add vinegar to lower it.

For low pH – clear ammonia will raise it.

Hard water (or well water) – add a water softener.

This is probably why you see weavers that say well I use “X” because “Y” just doesn’t give me good results. We all have different water.

While vinegar, ammonia, and softeners are not fixatives or mordants, they can seriously help with achieving better dyed reed – if your water is not relatively neutral to begin with. What works for one might not another.

So why did I put salt in my dye bath? From what I have read, salt actually helps the reed “accept” the dye better for a more saturated result in color depth. And we all want the deepest and richest color possible.

Hot water, room temperature or cold water? Definitely hot water. While reed is porous it needs help for the dye to deeply penetrate into the fibers. You really don’t want surface dyed reed, do you? Ideally keeping the water HOT for the full dye time is perfect. I didn’t say boiling though. Boiling reed for 30 minutes will most likely break down the fibers and you are going to end up with seriously hairy reed. Not a good plan.

You can buy Retayne from a basket supply store or even from Hobby Lobby (in the sewing department, which is also where they keep the Rit dye). Retayne is a “fixative” that helps to *prevent color bleeding* and is used in the RINSE water. This is not necessarily going to totally safeguard the reed from fading over time especially if exposed to direct sunlight (which is not a basket’s best friend), but it may help.

I used room temperature water for the Retayne bath and didn’t even wear gloves when swishing the reed around. The only reason why the earlier picture showed dye tinted rinse water was because I had let the dye water drip into it when transferring the reed. Next time, I would probably use a rinse vat of plain water first to just dip the newly dyed reed into and then directly transfer it to the Retayne rinse. And I would not hesitate to put various colors of dyed reed together in the same Retayne rinse bath.

You’ve really got to try this! You’ll save money and it’s actually very interesting and fun to do. Especially on these gorgeous upcoming fall days. Go outside and just “dye”. You can weave inside when it rains.



Color My World - and MY REED TOO!

Head on over to the Rit Dye Studio for an amazing color library. You can see the core color choices, Pantone seasonal colors, archived choices, recipes for mixing to achieve different shades – and you can even request a formula for your very own custom color. Click on the rainbow heading above to go to their main “ColorRit Color Formula Guide” now. Or click on one of their images to the right for other choices.



How to
Mix Colors



Archive
Colors



Request a
Color Formula

Bright Expectations Pattern Library

Clicking on any PICTURE will connect you to the pattern listing.

