



The Mushroom Dye-Gest

#7 Newsletter of the International Mushroom Dye Institute Spring / Summer 2004

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The IMDI Web Site is designed and maintained by our Newsletter Editor, Dorothy Beebee. We think that in the future, this Web site will become the best way for all interested mushroom dyers to communicate. Therefore, the IMDI Board of Directors has decided that upcoming Issue #8(Fall / Winter 2004) of the "Mushroom Dye-Gest" will be the last issue to be printed and mailed to all of our paid-up members and IFFF Representatives.

Beginning with the calendar year of 2005, the IMDI Newsletter will appear on the Web. IMDI members will be notified by e-mail in advance of its posting. One of the primary goals of the IMDI is to facilitate worldwide communication between mushroom dyers, so we hope that you will continue to support the goals of the IMDI with your membership of \$1000 per calendar year!!! We will continue to print and mail the newsletter to you, if you prefer, for an additional \$5.00per year.



Forum for
soppfargere/Nyttevekstf
oreningen i Norge Anna-
Elise Torkelsen,
Utvalgsleder FFS

Inspirert av Miriam Rice'
første bok "Let's Try
Mushrooms for Color"
(1974), gikk Karin
Hvoslef ut i skogen og

fant sopper som hun farget ullgarn med. Prøvefargingene førte til et samarbeid med Klaus Høiland som er ekspert på slekten kanelslørsopper - de mest ettertraktede fargesoppene. De norske skogene er rike på de fleste ulike fargesoppene, så tilgangen på sopper er god. Karin og Klaus skrev flere artikler om fargesopper i Våre Nyttevekster, og de ledet også i 1983 det første kurset i soppfarging i regi av Nyttevekstforeningen. Og virkelig fart i soppfargingen ble det etter at Hjørdis Hall Andersen hadde holdt et kurs i Norge i 1986.

I 1985 deltok fire norske soppfargere på det tredje internasjonale soppfargersymposiet i Sorø i Danmark. Det var første gang norske soppfargere deltok i internasjonal sammenheng, men siden 1985 har vi vært representert på samtlige symposier. De norske soppfargerne har arrangert to symposier i 1990 på Voss og i 1999 på Ringerike (Hønefoss). Brynhild Mørkved skrev i 1985 sammen med Klaus Høiland heftet "Garnfarging med sopp" som ble revidert i 1990 og fikk navnet "Sopp gir farger". Så i 1999 kom "Sopp til farging og papir" hvor Brynhild Mørkved og Anna-Elise Torkelsen er forfattere.

I 1992 samlet de norske soppfargerne seg og dannet Forum for soppfargere (FFS). Forumet har 130 medlemmer og samles til årlige treff med foredrag, diskusjoner, utstilling og trivelig samvær. Hvert år holdes det kurs i soppfarging på ulike steder i landet, de fleste i regi av Nyttevekstforeningen. Utvalget i forumet har vært aktive og har bl.a. fått laget en lysbildeserie av de vanligste fargesoppene samt en CD-rom "Fargerike soppgleder" med bilder av produkter som de norske soppfargerne har laget i løpet av 15 år! Forumet har en hjemmeside <http://www.nyttevekstforeningen.no/soppfargere.htm> med opplysninger om aktuelle arrangement.

I 2002 feiret FFS sitt 10-års jubileum med en stor utstilling "Kreative soppgleder - mote - mat - myte". Utstillingen viste en fargesprakende mangfoldighet av jakker, gensere, belter og bånd, votter, luer og skjerf, veggtepper og billedvev i ull, og bluser, overdelers og skjorter i silke og fløyel. Utstillingen var meget representativ for norsk soppfarging og ble besøkt av mange.

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Forum for soppfargere/The Norwegian Mushroom Dyers -
a short history by Anna-Elise Torkelsen

Inspired by Miriam Rice's book "Let's try mushroom for color" (1974), Karin Hvoslef went to her neighbouring woods to collect dye fungi. Her experiments led to a collaboration with Klaus Høiland, a wellknown expert on Dermocybes. The forests of Norway are rich in different fungi useful for dyeing, so it is easy for us to get enough dye stuff. Karin and Klaus wrote in 1982-84, several articles on dye fungi in our periodical "Våre Nyttevekster". They also gave the first course (1983) in mushroom dyeing held in Norway by Nyttevekstforeningen. After Hjørdis Hall Andersen from Denmark visited Norway in 1986, sharing her skills with us, dyeing with mushrooms really took off.

Four Norwegian dyers attended the 3rd IFFS in Sorø, Denmark in 1985. This was the first time we participated in international meetings, but since then we have been represented at every symposia. In 1990 at Voss and in 1999 at Ringerike (Hønefoss), we were the symposia hosts. In 1985 Brynhild Mørkved and Klaus Høiland wrote the booklet "Garnfarging med sopp" (Mushroom dyeing with wool) which soon became "the textbook" for the mushroom dyers. The book was revised in 1990 and named "Sopp gir farger" (Mushrooms give colour). In 1999 came another booklet "Sopp til farger og papir" (Mushrooms for dyeing and papermaking" by Brynhild Mørkved and Anna-Elise Torkelsen.

After years with experimenting and work, more or less alone, the Norwegian mushroom dyers in 1992 established "Forum for soppfargere" (FFS). The FFS is not an isolated guild, but a part of Nyttevekstforeningen. The most important social event is the annual meeting where the dyers meet for lectures, discussions and to exhibit their products. The venue for the meetings is in different places in Norway. The FFS has a board of five persons which take care of the Forum's tasks between the annual meetings. The board has put together slides of the most common dye fungi to be used by lecturers and teachers in their work. And to commemorate the 10 years anniversary of the FFS in 2002, a special CD "Fargerike soppgleder" (Colourful mushroom joy) was made. The CD shows a selection of photos of art and craft products made by Norwegian mushroom dyers. Courses in mushroom dyeing are given around the country each year, mostly by teachers from FFS. Our homepage is:

<http://www.nyttevekstforeningen.no/soppfargere.htm>

In 2002, when the FFS celebrated its 10 years anniversary, a magnificent and colourful exhibition of mushroom dyed products were shown at Asker museum, near Oslo.

The board 2003-2004: Marit Elind, Karin Hvoslef, Eldbjørg Johansen, Margrethe Steenberg and Anna-Elise Torkelsen (chair). Our address:
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From a letter from Betsy Samuelsen (Norway)

"You ask me how I became interested in mushrooming..... Well it all started when I was a child when my mother taught me how to pick *Chanterelles*. But what I can remember best was that I was a "mushroom" myself. In August 1946, we celebrated our Queens birthday in our village with a procession and every street had its own horse



car and our street had children as flowers and mushrooms, and on that (horse car) I was sitting as an "*Amanita muscaria*". Some years later at school we had to make Autumn decorations and there I always won prizes with my mushroom decorations. My first embroidery was actually with *Chanterelles* and *Amanita muscaria*.

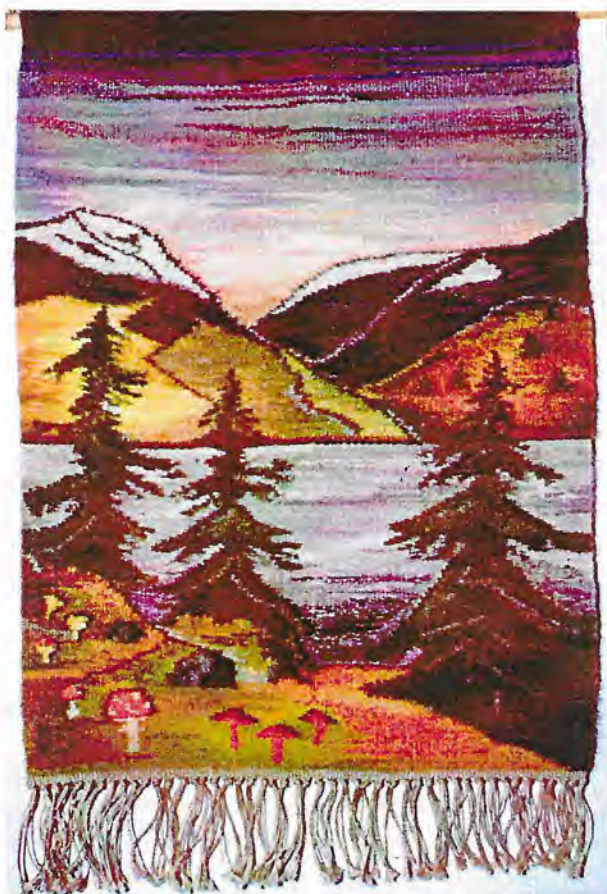
That was the start. When I was a Girl Guide I learned a little more about other mushrooms, but later on we were not allowed to pick mushrooms any more in Netherlands because of overpopulation.

My greatest interest came after

20 years when I had moved to Norway and came in contact with the mushroom club in Bergen. I wanted to learn more about mushrooms, and after awhile I wanted to become a person whom could verify mushrooms. Then I went to a course for natural dyes and I heard that you could dye wool with mushrooms as well, and as soon as the first course was organized in Bergen, in 1987, I joined it. I liked those amazing colours very much. But that was it.

A year later I got a phone call from Lillemor Torkelsen with the question if I wanted to help organize the first Fungi and Fiber Symposium in Norway. But I hadn't done anything after the course so I had to look for mushrooms for dyeing, and I took a course to learn to weave so that I knew a little more what it was all about. Then we organized the Symposium and there I could show my own products dyed with mushrooms, and I loved the colours so much that I kept going on with it. I tried the paper-making as well. I think that it is amazing that mushrooms can give that much pleasure, the whole year around. Now when I give my talks on mushrooms I always show what else you can do with them other than eating them!!!

I am very grateful to Miriam Rice for all she has done so that we can have fun with mushrooms in a new and very creative way, and to Lillemor as well, for if she hadn't contacted me for the first Symposium in Norway I am not sure that I would have had the interest in dyeing with mushrooms now, and have met so many nice and interesting people from all over the world. I am very grateful for that as well. That is all for now - lots of greetings with love from, *Betsy Wuestman Samuelsen*"



Tapestry woven with yarn dyed with mushrooms
by Betsy Samuelsen



Explorations with "The Bluefoot" (*Hydnellum suaveolans*)

by Carol Lee, (USA)

Ugh! What is that "groaty" white stuff scattered on the ground? Kind of looks like something that was "choked" up by some animal or other. Or partially melted old cream cheese slung carelessly on the ground. I have learned to poke with a stick first, before grabbing with my hands. Some yucky stuff masquerading as fungal stuff on the ground can turn out to be animal leavings. I always have to pick at least one of any of the white mushrooms and turn them over to see what is underneath.

Upon closer inspection, we find that it is a mushroom of sorts. You find this mushroom in the conifer woods. It can be found in a grouping such as shown in the picture, or one tiny small lump by itself. The picture shown was my best find. The mushrooms were scattered for about four or five feet. The mushroom looks kind of odd, being mostly white and sometimes turning dingy brown on top. The excitement starts when you grab hold of this spongy mushroom



and pluck it from the ground and blue, deep rich cobalt blue is the "stalk" of this mushroom. In the Eastern United States, I am told that the "stalk" is more violet colored, but here in Wyoming, it is a deep cobalt blue. Arleen Bessette says that KOH will stain the "stalk" blue green. But to see this mushroom, you just know that there has to be color in the stalk. It looks so much like Indigo that I was certain that a deep blue would appear. As all of us who dye with Natural Dyes and mushrooms in particular know, the appearance color is rarely the color that will transfer into our fiber.

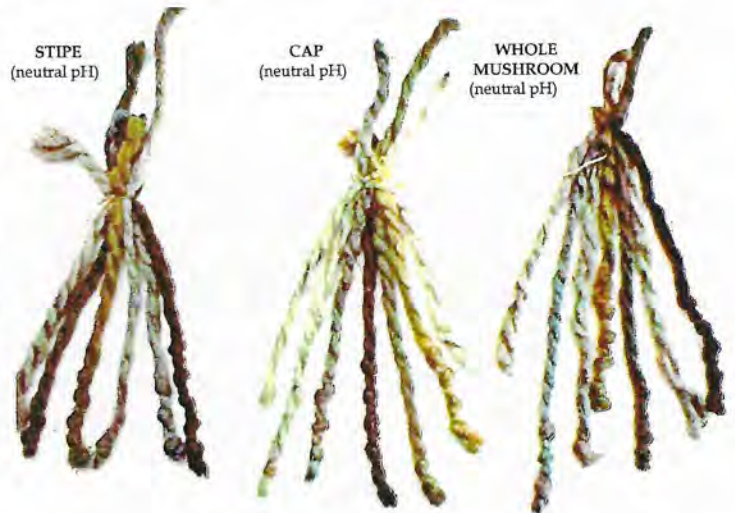


The beauty of this mushroom was clearly shown when sliced in this manner. Notice the rings on the "stalk" when sliced. Some of the larger mushrooms were sliced in half and then sliced across. The color appears both with the use of the colored stalk. As with most light colored mushrooms, too much of the light parts can absorb the dyestuff from the darker parts, and you lose much of what should go into your fibers.

As you can see, there was a side range of colors obtained from this

mushroom. Blues and greens, grays, yellows and golds, etc. -certainly a worthwhile mushroom for the dyepot. Changing the pH to a 10 made some differences, but as a whole, I preferred the colors from the neutral pot.

We found our mushrooms in September and October here in the Rocky Mountains, but the books say this mushroom is found August through November. Keep an eye out for it; lovely colors are there!



Color from *Omphalotus olearius* by Ken Olson, (USA)



It was another unusually dry year (1998) in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina and mushrooming was poor. We had invited Allein Stanley (NAMA past President) to spend a late September weekend with us at our Beech Mountain vacation cabin and even though the prospects were not good we decided to go "shrooming" along the Blue Ridge Parkway. A picnic lunch was packed and we headed for Price Lake Campground to enjoy a beautiful Fall day. As is typical during dry seasons you tend to pick up specimens that you wouldn't give a second look during normal seasons. Such was the case that day as Allein recognized an old, rotten specimen on a tree stump as an *Omphalotus olearius*. She picked it up and threw it in the

basket with the assortment of shelf fungi and other shriveled specimens that represented our efforts that afternoon. When we got back to the cabin that evening we set up the dye baths to check out some of the afternoon's collection that looked promising for some color. We decided the rotten *Omphalotus* was worth a try since the effort had been to collect. What a



Fresh *Omphalotus olearius* vs. old

surprise and thrill when the tester was pulled out with the beautiful shades of blue and blue-green, it was the hit of the evening.



Tester (5 mordants and 1 with no mordant (left to right))

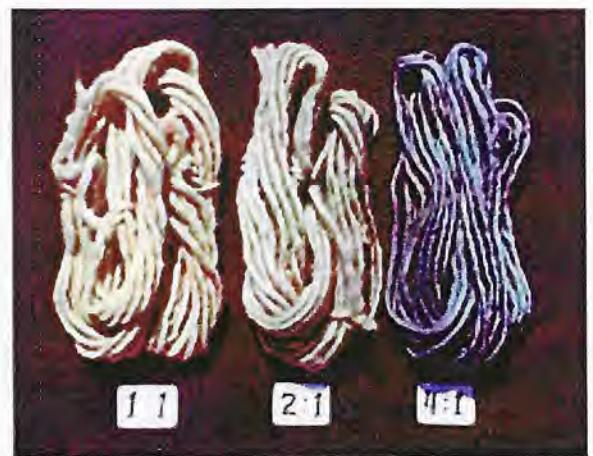
1. *O. olearius* - rotted and dried
2. *O. olearius* - rotted, fresh
3. *O. olearius* - freshly picked
4. *O. olearius* - 5 month old fermented bath

Since that time we have collected *Omphalotus* in all stages from very fresh to very rotten and tested for color. As expected young fresh specimens give virtually no color while rotten, slimy black specimens give beautiful blues. In some respects it shouldn't be too surprising that some color was obtained in rotted specimens of *Omphalotus olearius* since the Western (U.S.) species, *Omphalotus olivescens* has long been noted for its color giving characteristics. In addition it is known that some species like *Hypomyces lactiflorum* give more intense color the older and more rotten the specimen. Chemical changes obviously occur as an organism ages and senescence progresses. In some fungi these changes must result in the production of dye chemicals. This represents an interesting area of potential research for the natural dye chemist.

During our dyeing experiments we have found *O. olearius* to be a weak dyer since it takes about a 4:1 ratio of mushrooms to wool to give the stronger blues. Little difference was noted in colors obtained from rotted specimens which were used fresh versus dried. However if the collection consisted of a mix of mushrooms which were in various stages of rot and were not all black the colors tended to be more toward the gray-greens to sage greens. It follows that this was also true of 2nd and 3rd dye baths as the concentration of dye chemicals became weaker.

An interesting observation had been made with a very old dye batch (liquor and mushroom pieces) saved in an opaque milk carton from a dyeing session last October. When we poured out the five-month old contents the soured solution and pieces were completely creamy yellow. (Note: this should be done outside as the smell is quite nasty). Amazingly, when the tester was thrown in and cooked for an hour, it came out with rich color. More experimentation needs to be done but it appears that not all the dye chemicals are readily released from rotted *O. olearius* in the initial dye bath, which may indicate it is a stronger dyer than we first thought.

As a final note to the eastern (US) mushroom dyers, next time you pass that stump with a rotting collection of "Jack-o-Lanterns" don't turn your nose but grab a bag and start collecting. Your reward will be in the dye pot!



Ratios of mushroom to alum mordanted yarn using *O. olearius*