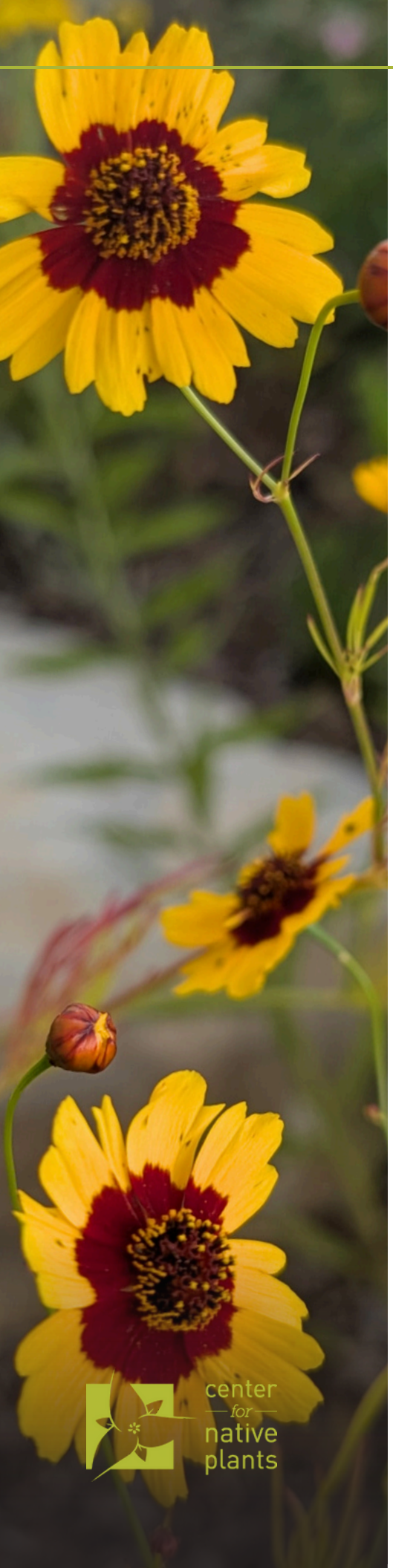

PLANT selection guide

Best Species for Natural Dyes

Humans have used plants to dye cloth for millennia. The most basic dyes are called direct dyes which do not require additional materials to create vivid colors. Simply boil the plant material and soak the fiber. Plants high in tannic acid, such as sumac, can be processed into direct dyes. Most dyes require a mordant to fix the color to the cloth. Mordants come in many forms, including ash and salt, but there are plants that are used as mordants as well.

The final color of your project will depend on a combination of factors. These include: how the dye plant is processed, the mordant used, and the fiber being dyed. Don't let this intimidate you! Be open to experimentation and the joy that comes with the unexpected!

Color	Common Name	*Genus species*	Active Structure
Red	Plains Coreopsis	*Coreopsis tinctoria*	Blossom
Red	Northern Bedstraw	*Galium boreale*	Root
Orange	Alder	*Alnus spp.*	Twigs
Orange	Yellow Prairie Coneflower	*Ratibida columnufera*	Blossom
Yellow	Yarrow	*Achillea millefolium*	Leaves
Yellow	Oregon Grape	*Berberis repens*	Bark
Yellow	Rubber Rabbitbrush	*Ericameria spp.*	Blossom
Yellow	Goldenrod Species	*Solidago spp.*	Blossom
Green	Bitter Cherry	*Prunus emarginata*	Fruits/ Leaves
Green	Stinging Nettle	*Urtica dioica*	Leaves
Blue	Larkspur Species	*Delphinium spp.*	Blossom
Purple	Serviceberry	*Amelanchier alnifolia*	Berries
Crimson	Elderberry Species	*Sambucus spp.*	Berries
Gray/Black	Sumac Species	*Rhus spp.*	Leaves
Black	Willow Species	*Salix spp.*	Root
Brown	Alder Species	*Alnus spp.*	Bark
Brown	Juniper Species	*Juniperus spp.*	All
Mordant	Alder Species	*Alnus spp.*	Bark
Mordant	Alumroot	*Heuchera cylindrica*	Root
Mordant	Juniper Species	*Juniperus spp.*	Needle ash

Example Dye Garden

Suggested planting for a garden bed 12 ft x 45 ft.

1 Plains Coreopsis *(Coreopsis tinctoria)*
2 Rubber Rabbitbrush *(Ericameria nauseosa)*
3 Oregon Grape *(Berberis repens)*
4 Canada Goldenrod *(Solidago canadensis)*
5 Blue Elderberry *(Sambucus nigra)*
6 Serviceberry *(Amelanchier alnifolia)*
7 Northern Bedstraw *(Galium boreale)*
8 Bracken Fern *(Pteridium aquilinium)*
9 Western Larkspur *(Delphinium occidentale)*
10 Alumroot *(Heuchera cylindrica)*
11 Three leaved Sumac *(Rhus trilobata)*
12 Bitter Cherry *(Prunus emarginata)*