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Coloring Wood

by Ed Hotchkin

Aniline dyes

Aniline dyes are reported to be very toxic so be sure to use rubber gloves and breathing protection.

Wood can be easily colored by using Aniline dye powders. These dyes come in three types: water soluble, alcohol soluble and oil soluble. Water solubles are deep penetrating and more light fast than the other two. Alcohol soluble colors are faster to use because the alcohol dries fast and you can sand and quickly go on to the next color. In the past, I have used water soluble but am switching to the alcohol. Oil soluble colors are used with toluol, lacquer thinner, turpentine or naphtha. Their advantage is that they don't raise the grain. I have never used the oil soluble colors.

The colors are best used on woods that have little natural grain pattern and the softer woods that will let the colors soak in.

The process is started by sanding with a coarse sand paper (80 grit for example) until all turning marks are removed. Be careful to remove all turning marks but don't sand too smooth as the form will take less of the dye. Starting with the darkest dye that you intend to use, cover the entire form. Rubber surgical glove are great to keep the hands from getting colored along with the form. Either a brush or wiping cloth works satisfactory. Next, sand the form with your next grade of sand paper, trying to smooth the form without removing all the color. Then, apply the second color in the same manner as the first. Again sand the form with your third grade of sand paper and then apply the third, lightest color. After these colors dry you may carefully apply a few streaks of one of the darker colors if you are not happy with the final product, but be careful and these streaks often look bad and unnatural. Finally sand and polish and then apply a very clear finish. I have been using a CA finish on my Buckeye.

Material Source. **Woodworkers Supply** **1 800 645-9292**

Water Soluble dyes			Alcohol Soluble dyes		
W1660 Nigrosine Black	1oz.	$4.75	A1850 Ebony Black	1oz.	$4.00
W1670 Bright Green	1oz.	$5.75	A1880 Forest Green	1oz.	$5.80
W1730 Bright Blue	1oz.	$5.90	A1910 Royal Blue	1oz.	$5.70
W1780 Brilliant Crimson	1oz.	$6.00	A1930 Magenta	1oz.	$5.70
W1850 Lemon Yellow	1oz.	$6.00	A1970 Lemon Yellow	1oz.	$5.70
W1750 Magenta	1oz.	$5.90	A1920 Violet	1oz.	$5.70

Remember safety with these materials

Marbling

The art of ebru or marbling as it is known in English, is a mysterious art whose history and technique hold many secrets. It was used by the Turkish at least by the 14th Century and maybe before that by the Chinese. Marbling is the technique that was once used to make the inside covers sheets of all books. Prochemical and Dye Inc. have a very good web site on the technique and history of Marbling at www.prochemical.com. The British magazine Woodturning had a recent very brief article on Marbling that reminded me that I had once Marbled paper and cloth.

Marbling is a water based process, is messy and requires a lot of experimentation. First a thick sizing is mixed on which the paint is floated. This sizing is made of one of two materials; Methyl Cel or Carrageenan. Carrageenan is a food thickening product made from seaweed. I have used it once and much prefer the Methyl Cel. Methyl Cel is mixed 3.5 level Tbs (25 g) to a gallon of room temperature water, then stirred for 1 to 2 minutes until clear. To this solution is added 1 tbs (5 ml) of clear household Ammonia. It is important that the Ammonia have no additives, You may also add 1 tbs of White Distilled Vinegar to bring the solution back to a neutral base. Again stir the solution for a couple of minutes and then let it sit for at least 45 minutes or overnight preferred. The solution will keep for a 3 or 4 months. The manufacturers instructions say that you can skim off the floating paint and again reuse the material, but I haven't been able to skim it clear enough for reuse. Just before using, the solution **must** be skimmed with a piece of newspaper in order to release the surface tension. The marbling colors are carefully dropped onto the surface so that they may float and then mixed to a pattern of your choice with a tooth pick or a large toothed comb. The kind of comb that women use to pin back their hair works well.

ProChemical sells a material that they call a Surfactant to add a drop or two at a time to the Color if the Colors tend to sink. This Surfactant will make the colors spread faster so you must be careful with the quantity that you use. If your colors are spreading too fast, ProChemical has a Colorless Extender that will change the surface tension and slow the spread of the color. Both of these materials should be part of your Marbling kit.

ProChemical claims that the wood should have an Alum dip before dipping in the colors as is done with paper and fabric. I have not yet confirmed that this is necessary; however, you should buy a small quantity of this material. It is mixed 4 level Tbs to a gallon of water and then stirred. The form is then dipped and allowed to dry before dipping in the color.

This whole process is very messy so if you want a happy home spread out lots of plastic and paper and remember your surgical gloves.

Material Source	**ProChemical and Dye**	**1 800 228-9393**	
M101	Alum	1lb.	$2.66
M112	Methyl Cel	1lb.	$10.97
MSUR Marbling Surfactant	8oz.	$4.92	

MCX	Colorless Extender	8oz.	$4.06
M##	Marbling Colors	8oz.	$5.12 M10 Lemon Yellow, M36 Red, M46 Blue, M60Black, M76 Green,M54 Brown

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Have Fun