EVGSWD: Dyeing workshop: Dyeing wool for beginners

Equipment and supplies:
Washing-up liquid; vinegar; bleach; acid dye powder.
Jars; measuring jug; measuring spoon; scales; wooden spoon.
Washing-up bowl; steamer or microwave; dye pot.
Net bags; labels for fibre.
Rubber gloves; face mask, kitchen roll.

Acid dyes are the least hazardous of chemical dyestuffs. They will dye protein fibres such as wool, silk and alpaca, and also nylon (but not other synthetic or plant fibres).

1. Soak fibre in warm water with a drop of washing up liquid for at least 30 mins. Squeeze out as much water as possible.
2. Mix dye powder with a little warm water to a paste in a measuring jug. Add more warm water to dissolve and make up to desired quantity with cold water.
3. Add required amount of dye solution to cold water in dye pot, with vinegar. You can also add a levelling or wetting agent to help the fibre to take up dye evenly; this can be a few drops of washing up liquid.
4. Stir, add fibre, and stir again gently.
5. Bring *slowly* to just below a boil. Simmer 30-40 mins, occasionally stirring carefully.
6. At the end of this time, the liquid should be clear (the dye bath has exhausted). If there is still colour in the liquid, add a couple more tablespoons of white vinegar and simmer another 10-15 mins. (Alternatively, remove the fibre and put some more undyed, soaked fibre in the dye; it will be a paler colour).
7. Let the dye bath cool. Then remove and rinse the fibre in water at the same temperature.
8. Some authorities recommend adding 1-2 teaspoons of baking soda to the dye bath to neutralise the acid.

Quantities to use (for most acid dyes, e.g. Kemtex, Ashford)

To dye 100gm fibre a strong to medium colour:
1 gm dye powder
3 litres water in dye pot
1-2 tablesp. white vinegar
1ml. washing up liquid as levelling agent.

Notes
- Tie skeins in several places with loose figure-of-eight ties (white or colour fast).
- Loose fibre may be better in a (white) mesh bag.
- If you label skeins/bags, use colourfast or white labels.
- You can use citric acid instead of vinegar if you dislike the smell.
- Fibre is a darker shade when wet.
- Colours vary in their ability to dye, e.g. turquoise is notoriously difficult to exhaust.
- Test dye solution on filter paper/ kitchen roll.
- Label containers of dye solution with the proportion of dye used.
- 1gm of dye to 100mls water is a 1% solution and will dye 100gms fibre a strong-to-medium shade. Dilute to taste!
- Keep records of your dyeing for future reference.