



# Prepare madder roots

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## Prepare your madder roots for dyeing

You can use [fresh madder roots](#) or you can buy [chopped dried madder](#) or [ground madder](#).

a) Fresh madder roots: Madder roots that have just been dug produce a more orange colour. You will get better reds if you chop and then dry the fresh madder roots, turning them often to prevent them going mouldy. You will need about 700 grams of fresh madder roots to get 100 grams of dried roots. If you have the time, leave the roots to age for one to two months.

b) Chopped dried madder roots: Soak in water for 24 hours. Some dyers suggest discarding the water used for soaking (which has the more soluble oranges) and adding fresh water, but I do not think this is necessary.

[Buy chopped dried madder](#)

Half-fill an electric blender (kept for dyeing) with water and put the lid on. Switch it on and add a few bits of root at a time through the small central opening on the blender lid. Grind in short bursts or pulse mode, then switch the blender off to let the bits settle down before switching it on again. Pour the resulting mash into a bucket and repeat the process until all the roots have been liquified.

c) Ground Madder: You can save time by starting with ground madder. Again soak the madder overnight, but do not throw the water away. Use the ground madder and the soaking water for dyeing.

Now;

[Dye with your prepared madder roots](#) (next page)

a) [Dye with madder dye using heat](#) (opens a new page) or

[Buy ground madder](#)

b) [Cold dye with madder roots](#) (opens a new page)

### Post script: Alternatives to using a blender

- **Hand meat mincer:** This did not work for me as the madder roots clogged up the mincer in no time. However, some dyers are successful using this technique.
- **Hammer and chopping board:** Bash fresh roots with a hammer over a chopping board. You can also bash dry chopped roots that have been softened by soaking them in water for a day or two. This is hard work and bits of madder root splash everywhere. To contain the splashes construct a 'wall' with a cut cardboard box round your working area. You could also try putting a piece of mordanted cotton fabric over the chopping board; this dyes the cotton in an interesting pattern the colour of blood.

If you find an easier low tech alternative than the hammer, please let us know.

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