

## **Alpaca Craft Project for Children of all Ages**

Are you getting ready for a farm open house and looking for a fun project or two? These fiber arts projects are fun for children of all ages.

### **Project One**

#### General Dyeing with Kool Aid

For projects 1&2 you need packets of unsweetened Kool-aid Drink mix

Pot

Dawn dishwashing liquid or any liquid soap

Vinegar

Water

Yarn or fiber (white or beige if you want bright colors, up to medium fawn for more “folk colors”)

Hot plate or stove

Kool-aid the drink mix of my childhood can be used as a color fast dye. Really! It will fade in the sun if its left out for days (like most acid wash dyes) but otherwise is color fast. You get really nice bright colors when dyeing white or beige. You can get some interesting “folk or country” colors over-dyeing fawns. You can dye some fiber or yarn in advance to

have for folks to see or dye it as a demonstration during farm days. I usually dye lots of orange, blue, pink, and green in advance for felting projects and demonstrations.

I use two packets of unsweetened kool-aid to 4 cups of water with a dash of vinegar. I put in about 2 generous ounces of white or beige fiber/yarn and let it heat on the stove in a pot for about 40 minutes (it should be steaming but not boiling). Let it cool then rinse the fiber in cool soapy water and then rinse the soap out in cool water. (I use Dawn dishwashing liquid). Any of the regular unsweetened kool-aid flavors work. My favorites are berry berry blue and kiwi lime watermelon (green). Avoid the invisible flavors they are in fact invisible and useless for dyeing. The “ice” flavors are a bit chalky, which I don’t like but it can be an interesting effect. Let the fiber/yarn dry in the sun or under a fan. You will know its dry when it blows all over your yarn (so be careful if its windy out).

## **Project Two**

### **Rainbow Dyeing with Kool-aid**

My friend Nancy did a rainbow kool-aid dyeing demonstration with both yarn and fiber at the county

fair a couple years ago. She had a hot plate set up outside. She let some older kids help pour kool-aid drink mix right from the little packets into the pots. She used multiple colors and got some really pretty rainbow dyed yarns. If you want to try rainbow dyeing, soak the yarn in a water with a squirt of Dawn dishwashing liquid. Transfer it to a pot and just barely cover it with water and a dash of vinegar. Sprinkle kool-aid in (I kind of make a peace sign and then put one or two other colors in the open spaces between the lines of the peace sign.) Don't stir or agitate the pot, let it get hot enough to steam (but not boil) for about 40 minutes. Let it cool and rinse the yarn in cool water and dawn and then rinse with plain water. You could have this in various stages for folks to see. In general people are very entertained that kool-aid can be used as a color fast dye.

Neat color combos:

Berry berry blue and kiwi lime watermelon

Orange and strawberry

Cherry, orange and lemonade (hint do the lemonade first with a hint of orange) if you add a dash of grape it looks neat too.

Project Three

Make a Tiny Felted Planet Earth necklace.

You need:

blue and green fiber

Soap and water (Dawn works well)

Dish to dunk fiber in

Embroidery floss to string necklaces

embroidery needles for stringing

Dye some white or beige fiber (berry berry blue and either lime or kiwi lime water melon kool-aid will work). Get a small pinch of dyed fiber. Pull the fiber apart and lay in on top of itself over and over again. It should be very fluffy. Dunk the fiber in warm soapy water (any soap will do but Dawn dishwashing liquid works well). You can kind of toss the wet fiber “blob” back and forth between your hands and it will form a “skin”. Pretend the fiber is clay and start rolling it around in your hands. Pinch it from all directions. Alternate pinching and rolling. If it’s not felting (turning into a hard bead) dunk it in the soapy water again. Eventually (in about 5 minutes usually) if you keep rolling and pinching it will felt into a bead. Rinse in the non-soapy water. String your bead. (I use an embroidery needle and embroidery floss). Kids generally just wear them a

little wet. You can make rainbow beads too with multiple colors. You can make natural colored beads too.

## Project 4

### Making a piece of felt

#### You need

A felting mat (Purchase some cheap plastic but textured placements, the ones that kind of look woven (bubble wrap, textured shelf liner, or bamboo placemats also work).

Soap and warm water

Carded fiber

Large pan to dunk in

Surface to roll on (can be a picnic table or your driveway) some place that can take spilled water

Rubber Bands

If you use those textured placemats or bubble wrap you can cut them to be the size you want to make (a few inches square to really big). It depends how much fiber you want to use. Layer the fiber on the mat all going the same direction. Lay another layer going the opposite direction. Lay a third layer going the same as the first layer. Sprinkle the fiber with warm soapy water. Roll up the placemat and put

some tight rubber bands on the end. Dunk in warm soapy water. Roll roll roll (kids love the slopping in water part and the rolling part). After about five minutes and you have a piece of felt!

If you don't have carded fiber you can get a couple of slicker brushes used for dog grooming and card some. Actually that is something else folks can do! Let them card their fiber for the project. I like to use black seconds and thirds for the felt pieces and then lay in some bright kool-aid dyed contrasting colors.

Try one or more of these out before farm days and see if they work okay for you. It's a great way to entertain not just kids but everyone. They get a little alpaca souvenir to take home! They will come back next year to do it again. If you have any questions just call or e-mail me (amerriwe@binghamton.edu , 607-785-8226)