

Learn About Natural Dye with High Point Museum!

Spend some time outside and look at all of the different plants around you. Do you ever wonder what you can do with some of them? Some plants are grown for food, like your herbs, fruits, and vegetables. Some are grown for medicine to help with fevers or tummy aches. Some plants are grown for the pretty flowers they make. All of these plants provide natural materials to create dye, which helps make our fabric and cloth pretty colors!

Here are some common plants that could be in your garden that make dye:

Blackberry – light gray

Black Walnut – browns, greys (can also be used for ink)

Calendula – lemon yellow (can be used to color butter and cheese)

Dandelion – soft yellow

Madder Root – red and orange

Marigold – yellow orange

Marjoram – purple to reddish-brown

Onion skin – yellows, greens, oranges

Yarrow – medium green

Experiment with different kinds of plants to see what kind of colors they will make! Next, experiment with wool, linen, silk, or cotton fabric to see how dye can affect the colors!

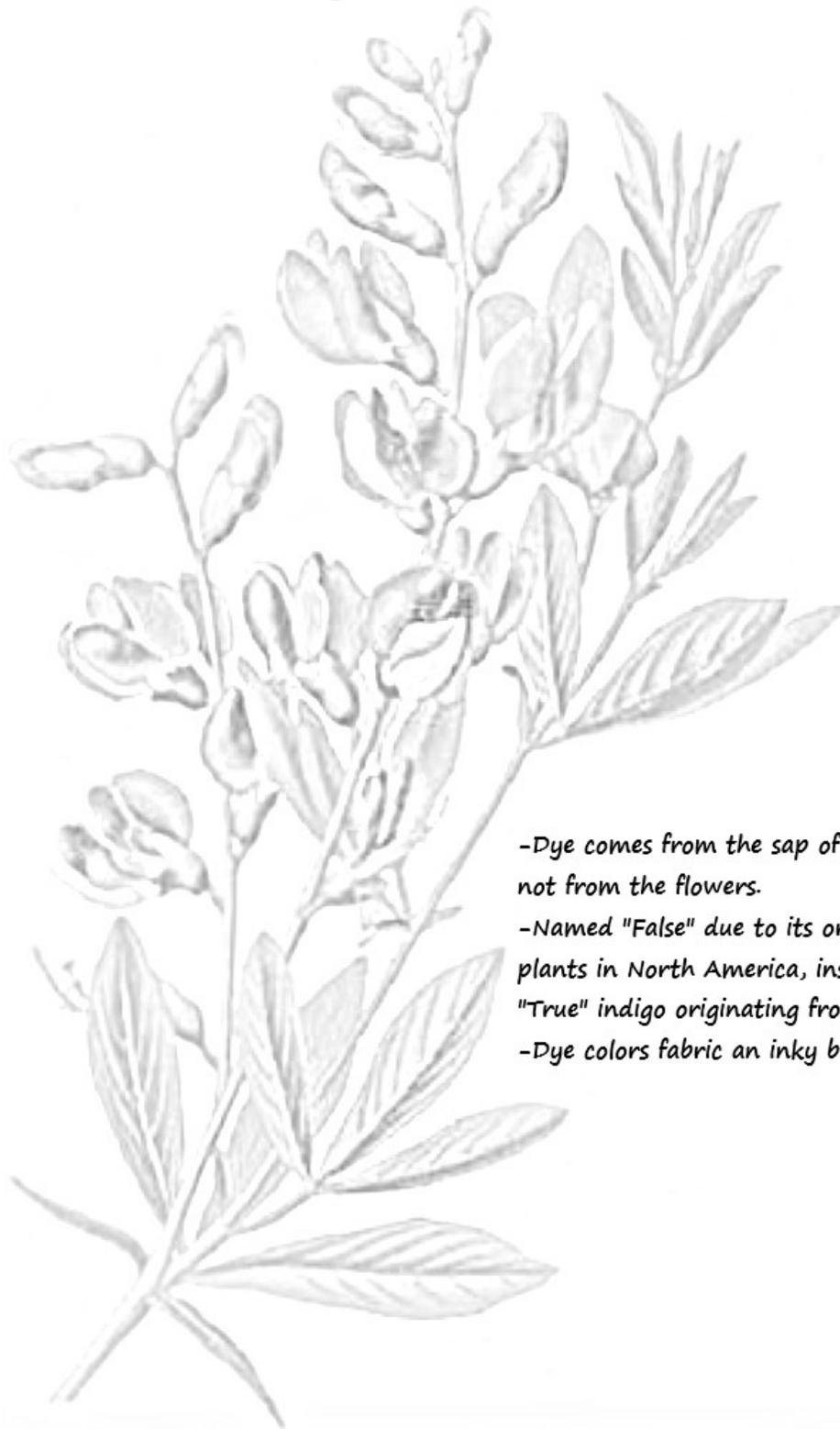


There are some things that will affect the color of your material:

- 1. Fibers: Plant fibers – cotton, linen, burlap
Protein fibers – animals and bugs (wool/cochineal)*
- 2. Water quality: Alkaline (higher pH), Acid (lower pH)*
- 3. Temperature: Cold or Hot*
- 4. Time in Bath: Sometimes the time spent soaking = dark or light color*
- 5. Time of year: Growing conditions (region, soil type) and the plant part (fresh or dried, maturity)*
- 6. Type of Pot: Iron, aluminum, copper*
- 7. Mordants (helps bond the dye to the fiber):*
 - Natural acid found in plants or insect*
 - Metallic salts of iron (dark), aluminum (bright and light), and copper*

Have fun experimenting with your natural dyes and your fabric! Enjoy these coloring pages of some of the dye plants we have growing in our garden.

Blue False Indigo



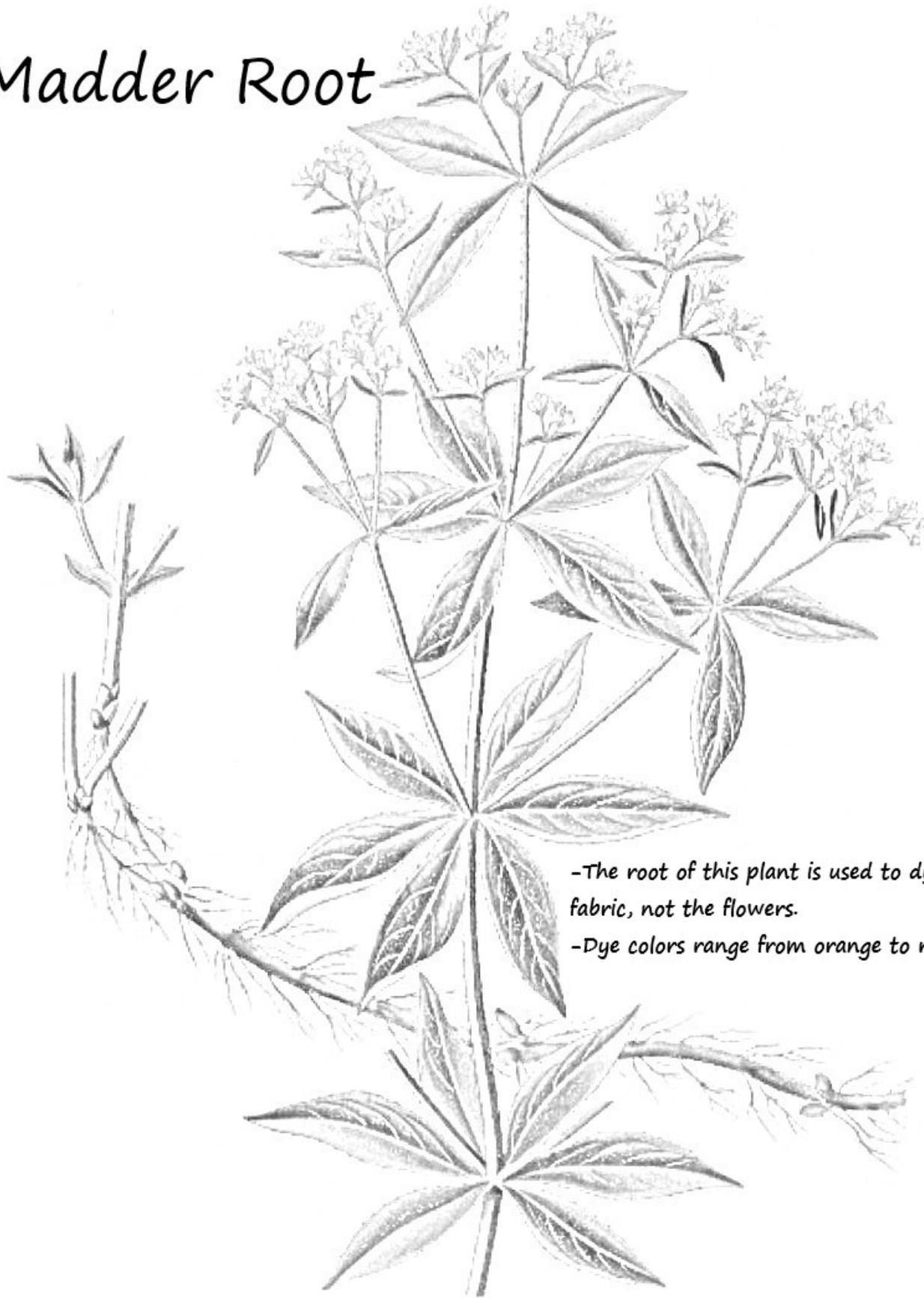
- Dye comes from the sap of the plant, not from the flowers.
- Named "False" due to its origin from plants in North America, instead of the "True" indigo originating from Asia.
- Dye colors fabric an inky blue to blue.

Calendula



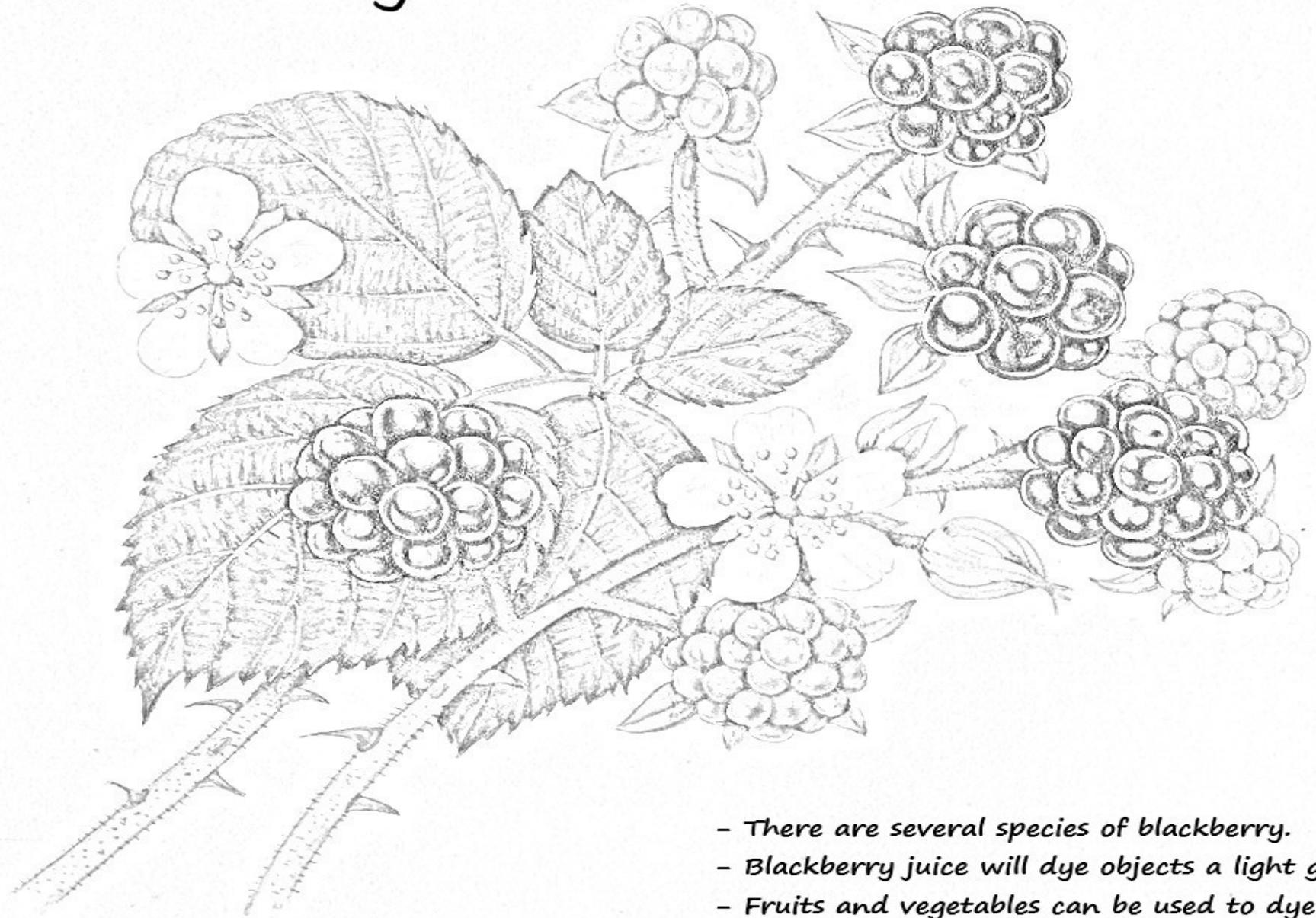
- Flowers are used to dye objects.
- Dye color is lemon yellow.
- Is also used to give butter and cheese their yellow color.

Madder Root



- The root of this plant is used to dye fabric, not the flowers.
- Dye colors range from orange to red.

Blackberry



- There are several species of blackberry.
- Blackberry juice will dye objects a light gray.
- Fruits and vegetables can be used to dye objects.