

# on DVD

Reviewed by Barbara Shapiro

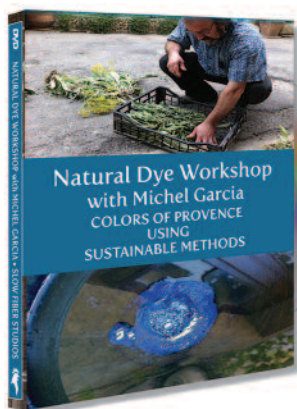
**Natural Dye Workshop  
with Michel Garcia:  
Colors of Provence Using  
Sustainable Methods**

2-Disc DVD set; 183 minutes  
Slow Fiber Studios, Berkeley, California, 2012

This two-disc DVD set provides a wonderful tool for dyers of all levels who seek to understand how natural dyes should be used in the 21st century. Natural-dye expert Michel Garcia has a deep understanding of the chemistry of dyeing, which he shares with clear and detailed explanations of basic and complex applications. Filmed by Studio Galli and produced in multiple languages, this set covers dyes on cotton using the traditional Provençal fabrics that Garcia examines with producer Yoshiko Wada of Slow Fiber Studios. Inspired by these lovely polychrome floral cloths, Garcia works without the caustic ingredients that are harmful to the environment and the dyers, and in some cases rotted the fabrics with time.

In the DVD, we visit the Jardin Conservatoire des Plantes Tinctoriales, which was founded by Garcia on the grounds of the historic Chateau de Lauris and nurtures dye plants from around the world. The first DVD, devoted to indigo and woad, offers several easy recipes for natural vats and resists. The second DVD deals with *garance*, the traditional madder red from Provence, safe mordanting, and dyeing cotton with a variety of other natural dyes including cochineal, Osage yellow, and gall nuts. The inclusion of a recipe for fixing the mordant before

dyeing is an important step that is rarely taught. For those seeking a more complex cloth, polychrome effects including clay resist and lemon juice color removal are also explained in a simple and clear manner. Additional chapter notes available from Slow Fiber Studios enrich the learning experience.



**Natural Dye Workshop II with Michel Garcia: Colors of the Americas on Wool Fibers Using Sustainable Methods**

2-Disc DVD set; 203 minutes  
Slow Fiber Studios Berkeley, California, 2012

The second set of DVDs from Slow Fiber Studios takes us to Oaxaca, Mexico, where we meet Zapotec dyers and local weavers. For dye chemist Garcia, the local botany and natural history is as important as the cultural history of dyes of the

Americas. He explores color on white and brown wool in the tradition of local tapestry weavers. We learn about natural bio-accumulators of aluminum, plants found around the world that effectively replace polluting metal salt mordants.

The “no waste” approach and a preference for locally sourced ingredients lead Garcia to reduce indigo with mango peels from his breakfast along with naturally occurring lime. A more UV-resistant one-step replacement for the time-consuming European alum and cream of tartar formula for cochineal uses tannins found in gall nuts and acids from lemon juice. Two different methods of achieving the mythic Mayan Blue pigment found on ancient wall paintings and potteries are demonstrated. Yellows, purples, and greens are also explored, providing a full range of harmonious colors. Garcia makes it all look simple as he leads us along a path of safe and sustainable creativity.

We also visit points of interest including Oaxaca’s Textile Museum, the Ethnobotanical Garden, and artist Francisco Toledo’s Centro de las Artes de San Augustin located in a former textile mill where this attractive film was shot. Plans are now in the works for a third set of DVDs that will explore dyeing silk with sustainable methods. [www.naturaldyeworkshop.com](http://www.naturaldyeworkshop.com)

—Barbara Shapiro is a San Francisco Bay Area weaver, dyer, basket maker, and textile arts educator who is frequently exhibited and published. [www.barbara-shapiro.com](http://www.barbara-shapiro.com)

