

## DYEING SAMPLE BY DEB GREER

I received two beautiful, delicate skeins of a loosely spun 2-ply kid mohair for Christmas. It was a nearly lace weight knitting yarn, which is out of my weaving comfort zone, but so soft and lovely I had to find a way to weave with it! The gal who gave it to me said “Deb, it’s NOT WARP.” But I had this delicate scarf made of air, clouds, and sky all imagined in my head... So, with the not-warp warning still ringing in my ears, I set out to see what other fine and delicate fibers I had in the stash to strengthen and support my precious skeins on the loom. I found an oz. of white baby alpaca (a handful gift from a spinner) for fuzz and a small stack of silk hankies for strength. Oh, now that would be nice! I washed the silk hankies in mild detergent prior to dyeing to make sure all the seracin was removed. Seracin is the stickum that keeps the silk cocoon together, and it is dye resistant. Once the hankies were washed and rinsed, I soaked all 3 fibers for 30 min. in their own lingerie bags in hot water with a cup of non-iodized salt thrown in as a softener, and a tiny squirt of dishwashing liquid as a wetting agent. In the meantime, I made a medium turquoise dye bath using a 30% solution of Jacquard acid dye, straight from the bottle with no color mixing. I find that turquoise in particular needs to be thoroughly stirred to dissolve when making the solution to add to the dye bath. Using enough hot water to make a paste, initially, then adding more hot water while stirring to make the stock solution, I filled a spaghetti sauce jar and labeled it for future reference. There wasn’t much fiber to dye, so I made a small dye pot, using about a gallon and a half of water in a narrow stock pot, to give vertical space to stack my fibers. Added about ¼ of the jar of dye stock to the heating water in the pot and stirred to disperse. I lightly squeezed the hot soaking water out of each fiber, and stacked them in the pot without bags, with the baby alpaca on bottom, silk hankies next, then the two skeins of kid mohair. The theme of the stack: I didn’t want any agitation of the baby alpaca at all and if the dye was streaky because of no stirring, that would disappear with carding. The silk hankies kept the alpaca off the yarn, which needed to move a lot to be evenly dyed. The mid position of the hankies let them take the dye however they would, and any streaks might add interest to the spun yarn. Something to know about dyeing with turquoise is that it needs more heat for longer to set the dye. So I brought the pot to a simmer just short of boil and let it cook for 15 minutes, removed the yarn and hankies, added ¾ cup of vinegar (a little extra acid helps too!), and returned the fibers to the pot. Lid on, and simmer again for 45 minutes. When the lid came off, the fiber had absorbed almost all of the pigment, so the water was nearly clear. After letting the batch cool down slowly for several hours, I rinsed well. Final rinse with a little lemon juice. There was not even a hint of fugitive dye in this batch. I was impressed at the even color I got from the 3 fibers. Once dry, they all seem to be identical colors except for the level of sheen reflected, and a few edges on the hankies that still had seracin, so remained pure white.

### Turquoise Breeze Dye pot

Fibers from left to right: 1. Tussah silk top, undyed.  
2. One oz. baby alpaca, uncarded. 3. Two Skeins kid mohair yarn. 4. Silk hankies and 5. Below more silk hankies

