

Washing Hand-Dyed Fabric

General approach:

1. Remove some dye, soda and other auxiliaries in cool/warm water before moving to hot water. Several very short cycles with Synthrapol (which is made for soaping Procions and is available from dye companies). This can be done by hand in the sink or in the washer.
2. Moving to hot water too soon will stain the whites. Final hot wash must be 140°F (60°C) or higher.
3. To avoid transferring of colors on the fabric, use short cycles and never leave the partly washed fabric bundled up together in warm or hot water for a length of time. Line dry unless final washing at 140°F (60°C) has been done.
4. When working with small amounts, it saves energy and time to wash up through the hot/cold cycle and line dry, then wait to have more fabric for a full load. For many small pieces, it may work well to wash with Synthrapol briefly getting some of the dye etc out of a piece of fabric before using the washing machine. Then wash warm/cold, one or more times, then wash hot one or more times, depending on the amount of dye in the water.



Details:

1. For a messy load of fabric covered with dye and soda and maybe lots of print paste: Put it all in the washer with a 1/2 teaspoon to 1 Tablespoon of Synthrapol depending on the number of yards of fabric. DO NOT USE TOO MUCH AS IT WILL FOAM AND THE MACHINE WILL STOP AUTOMATICALLY. READ THE DIRECTIONS ON THE SYNTHRAPOL IF NOT FAMILIAR WITH HOW CONCENTRATED IT IS. Start on the rinse/drain cycle, cold water/and high spin. If it is really dark colors and lots of white, do another cold rinse and spin.
Be sure to untangle threads and fabric between loads.
2. Then run a rinse/drain cycle, warm water rinse, if you have it, and high spin. Do it again if it is a lot of fabric and mixed colors and values. Each time use a small amount of Synthrapol.

3. Then do a short quick wash on warm, full cycle then do it again if needed. Then do a short hot cycle. Only move to hot water if you are not worried about staining whites or transferring reds. If you see a lot of color in the water, cancel and rinse and drain. Each wash, use a small amount of Synthrapol.
Be sure to untangle threads wrapping around the fabrics.
4. Then I run it all on the “sanitary” cycle—long and HOT with Synthrapol. The machine actually heats the water to 150° F, so it gets the last bit of color out that might not have been released.

Note about hot water heaters:

1. Many hot water heaters are set at 122° F (50° C) which is not hot enough remove excess dye, particularly dark colors. An on-demand hot water heater with a thermostat that can be adjusted makes life easier for dyers.
2. Many front-loading washing machines will use water more efficiently and will not tangle fabric as much as top loaders. These features make it easier to control washing out excess dye:
 - A super-hot cycle sometimes called a “sanitary” cycle.
 - Ability to start on rinse/drain, or start on drain/spin
 - Ability to cancel at any point