

Fermented Indigo Vat: Post #11

Problem solving and other practical stuff

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LOW PH

If the alkalinity of the vat falls too low, the vat becomes a good environment for water born insects. They may appear as small larva on the underside of the vat lid or at the “high tide line” of the dye vat vessel – just at the edge of the liquid volume. If the larvae are allowed to hatch, then small flying insects will appear at the surface. If this occurs, it is a clear indication that the pH has gotten too low and it’s important to rectify that immediately. Rinse off your lid to removed the larvae and wipe out the larvae from the sides. Then add lime, stir, and monitor the vat carefully. Increasing the pH will create an environment in which these larvae cannot survive. The amount of lime required will depend on the size of the vat. Monitor the vat carefully for the next few days.



Small larvae on the inside cover of my vat. This is a sure sign that the pH is too low and it’s time to add lime. If allowed to hatch, you will have small flying insects.

LARGE VATS

It's best to place a vat of 50 liters (or more) onto a dolly with wheels so that it can be moved easily.

“SEEDING” OF VATS

Small test vats can be added to a brand new vat in order to speed up the fermentation process. I have successfully started 50 liter vat fermentation vats in less than 24 hours by adding 5 or 6 small test vats (fully reduced) in addition to all the other required materials for the larger vat. This is an easy way to make a fermentation vat available for a workshop or class or for building a vat more quickly in the studio. Think of it like a sour dough starter.

CONTINUE TO EXPERIMENT

I often will mix up small test vats in order to learn, answer my questions, and deepen my own knowledge:

- Does soda ash work as well as potash? YES
- Will spent Rhubarb root work as well as madder root? YES
- Will spent Dock root work as well as madder root? YES
- Will a fermented vat work with synthetic indigo? YES
- Etc. etc. This is how we learn.