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## Mediaeval ink

As a scrivener I am often asked for the recipe which I use for my ink

This recipe will produce half a gallon of good medieval ink (suitable also for civil war (English) periods) which will start out grey, turn black and, if allowed to stay in daylight, rot to a very warm and pleasant brown, familiar to anyone who has has been privileged to see a genuine document.

You will need:

8oz (225g) bruised oak galls (a larger quantity will make stronger ink) I have now raised this to 12oz (336g) and found this to give a very black ink

4 pints (2.25ltrs) boiling water

A few drops of tincture of myrrh (optional)

1.5oz (42g) gum arabic

3oz (84g) sulphate of iron (This is becoming harder to get hold of, I am attempting to find a supplier otherwise iron filings will have to be used though these take longer)

It's worth getting a number of small containers ready as well. These are obviously for containing the ink when it's ready and the smaller the better. The ink works by oxidation so each time a container is opened it will degenerate a little. I usually buy a couple of dozen 25cl bottles with screw caps. Just give the galls a light bashing to bruise them or crush them slightly in a bag, they don't have to be ground up.

Steep the galls in the water for 24 hours and then strain the liquid (a sort of brown tea). Mix the tincture of myrrh (if you are using it to add a pleasant odour) with the gum arabic and stir the mixture into the gall solution. Now add the iron sulphate, stirring to ensure that it all dissolves (the liquid will turn black). Strain it again if required and then bottle and label it. This mixture is very poisonous so please keep it well away from children and label it clearly

Notes: Oak galls are formed by a small wasp which lays its egg in an acorn and stimulates the tree to pump tannin into the infected region. This tannin, when mixed with an iron salt produces the black ink. These are very common in the UK and if you would like further information on this wasp in the USA visit [http://wasps.ctw.net/gall\\_wasp/index.html](http://wasps.ctw.net/gall_wasp/index.html)