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Mediaeval red ink

This recipe will produce three pints of good medieval red ink (suitable also for civil war (English) periods) which will produce the deeper red colour found on medieval documents. This red is somewhat purple and varies on modern paper where it reacts with the sizing.

You will need:

3 pints vinegar

4oz alum

1oz gum arabic

4oz finely rasped brazilwood

Boil the vinegar slowly with the brazilwood for about half an hour. The original recipe says to use a pewter or earthen vessel to avoid contamination but I used a pyrex saucepan. The colour will be a strange yellow. Add the alum, the mixture will turn a wonderful red, and the gum arabic. When these are dissolved strain the mixture through a cloth. When cooled place in a well stoppered bottle. This mixture should not be drunk so please keep it well away from children and label it clearly

Notes: brazilwood is used to make violin bows so a good bow maker may well let you have his shavings. If not it is available from a dyeing supplier.