

# Dyeing with SolarFast



*This image of a lilikoi flower was made from a photo and dyed onto fabric using SolarFast.*

I love to experiment with different dyes and the effects that can be achieved. As soon as I discover a new product or dye process, I'm quick to try it. SolarFast from Jacquard is a product that is activated by exposure to the sun. The quick development time for this dye (10–24 minutes) encourages experimentation and I find I can play with several methods in one day. The technique that excited me the most was printing photo negatives onto fabric. I also experimented with shadow printing and resist dyeing. You, too, can take advantage of the next sunny day to create new fabric.

## DIRECTIONS

When working with SolarFast, it's important to do as much preparation as possible before opening the dye. This dye reacts very quickly!

### The day before

1. Cut the fabric in pieces 1"–2" larger than the size of the transparency film you plan to use.
2. If there is a definite right side to the fabric, place a small mark on an edge to indicate it.
3. Iron the fabric to eliminate any wrinkles. Do not use starch or sizing.
4. Using your computer's printer, print the image as a negative on the transparency film.

### On dyeing day

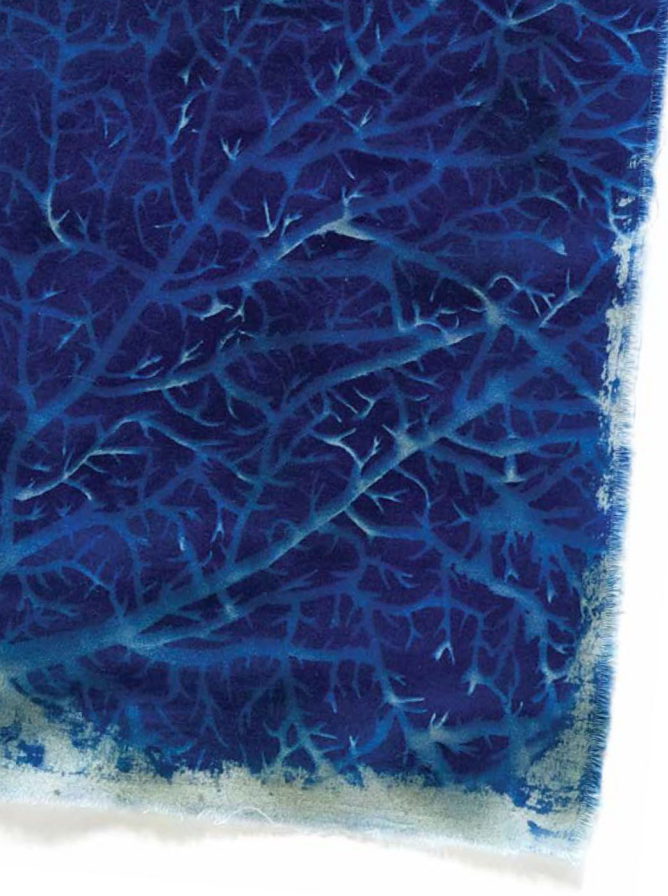
1. Set up a dyeing station in a well-shaded area. Cover the work surface with the drop cloth.
2. Nearby, set up a developing station in an area that will get constant, bright sun for at least 30 minutes. Cover this surface with a plastic drop cloth as well.

**NOTE:** If the developing station table is glass, cover it with something solid like a black trash bag. This will prevent light reflecting from under the glass table, which will overdevelop the dye.

3. Shake the SolarFast dye before opening the bottle. Avoid sun exposure as much as







possible to conserve the dye. Never leave the bottles of dye open!

**TIP:** The colors of these dyes are quite intense at full development. For lighter colors, dilute the dye with water or shorten the development time. After mixing the dyes, cover the container until you are ready to apply it to the fabric.

4. Fill a dark bucket with very hot water (at least 150°F) and a capful of SolarFast Wash or Synthrapol. Set it aside at the developing station.

**TIP:** Use an opaque bucket to prevent the dye from continuing to develop while it is in the water.

## Imprint the photos

**TIP:** If you want the edges of the print to be squared up, use masking tape to keep the fabric aligned before applying the dye.

1. Working at the dyeing station, pour some SolarFast into a plastic container, replacing the top on the bottle immediately. Quickly apply it to the entire surface of the fabric with the sponge brush. If it seems overly wet, remove the excess by blotting with a paper towel.
2. Place the transparency on the fabric with the printed side up, away from the dye. (Figure 1)

## MATERIALS

**NOTE:** All supplies must be dedicated to nonfood use.

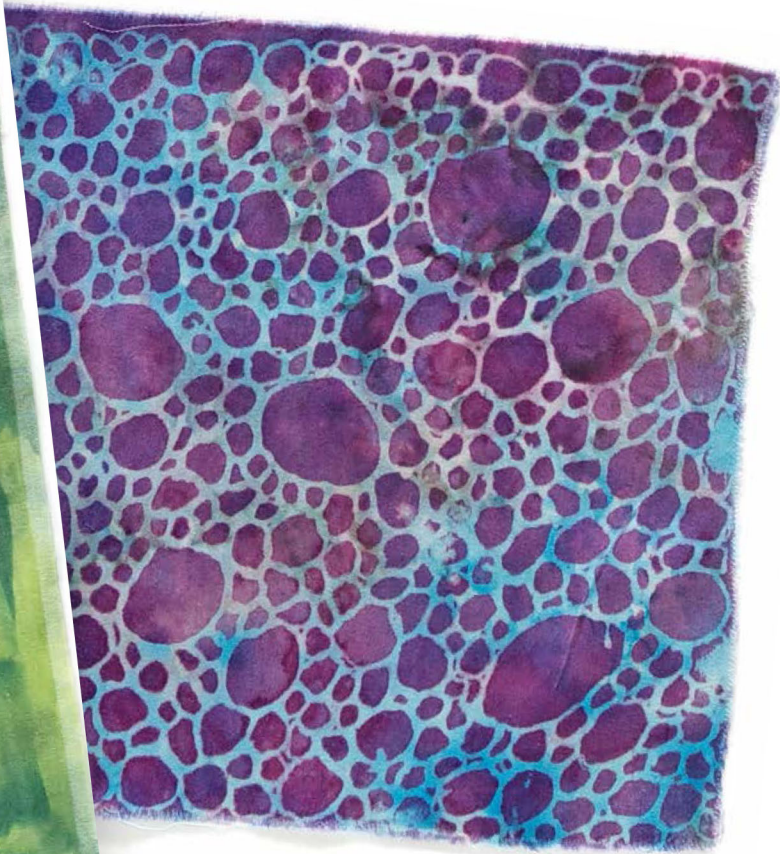
- Prepared for dyeing (PFD) fabric, ½ yd.
  - Transparency film for home printer (Find a brand that works in the printer you will be using.)
  - Photo negatives
  - Outdoor work surface
  - Plastic drop cloths
  - Jacquard® SolarFast™ dye
  - SolarFast™ Wash or Synthrapol
  - Opaque bucket with lid, 2-5 gallon capacity
  - Rubber gloves and work clothes
  - Plastic containers (Use opaque containers that won't admit light to allow more time with the dye before discarding it.)
  - Sponge brush
  - Paper towels
  - Non-polarized glass, large enough to cover the fabric
  - Dowel rod (for stirring fabric and hot water)
- Optional**
- Shout® Color Catcher®
  - Items to cast shadows (See the shadow dyeing section for suggestions.)
  - Water-based resist
  - Stencil or design
  - Water soluble fabric marker
  - Brayer and round paintbrushes



Process photos by Dee Conlon

Figure 1





3. Move the fabric and transparency into the sun and cover the transparency with the piece of glass.
4. Leave it in the sun for 10–24 minutes until the image is developed. (Figure 2) You can lift the glass and peek at a corner to check the progress, but be careful not to move the transparency. Once the image is developed, work quickly to immediately set the dye.

### Set the dye

NOTE: The development of the image is incomplete and not set until you rinse the fabric.

1. After the development is finished, remove the transparency and submerge the fabric into the bucket with the hot water and SolarFast Wash or Synthrapol. Vigorously swish it around in the water with a dowel rod. If you are dyeing several pieces, you can leave the finished pieces soaking in

Figure 2





can leave the finished pieces soaking in the bucket while you work on the other pieces but cover the bucket to eliminate any additional exposure to the sun.

2. Once you've rinsed all the pieces, wash them by machine with vigorous agitation using hot water. I like to add a Shout Color Catcher to the wash to capture any residual dye.

## *try these additional* SolarFast techniques

### Shadow dyeing

1. At the dyeing station, place a piece of fabric on the work surface. I like using an 18" × 22" piece of fabric (fat quarter) for this technique.
2. At the development station, have items ready that will cast shadows. Flowers, leaves, and twigs make interesting imprints, but anything that will cast a shadow will work. This technique works best using solid items—if the sun can shine through, the results may not be what you hoped for.
3. Use a sponge brush to apply the dye to the fabric. Bring the fabric to the development station. Place your items on top of the fabric (or simply scrunch the fabric) to create shadows. If the items are flat or lightweight, place the glass on top of them to prevent them from blowing away.
4. Leave the fabric in the sun for 10–24 minutes and check the results. If the images are not bold enough, leave them in the sun a little longer. Once developed, immediately set the dye by rinsing the fabric as described.

### Resist dyeing

For this technique, I've used several types of fabric—white, hand-dyed, and commercial—with equal success. If the fabric is not PFD, however, wash it first in hot water and Synthrapol.

1. Choose the design or stencil you want to use. Trace or draw it onto the fabric using a water-soluble maker.

**NOTE:** If you are comfortable painting freehand, skip Step 1.

2. Trace over the design with the water-soluble resist, applying it with a paintbrush or sponge brush. Follow the manufacturer's directions for drying time. To be sure the resist is completely dry, I recommend painting the resist a day or two before dyeing.
3. At the dyeing station, apply the dye to the fabric using a sponge brush or brayer.
4. Move the fabric to the developing station and cover it with the glass.
5. Leave the fabric in the sun for 10–24 minutes and check the results. Once developed, immediately set the dye by rinsing the fabric as described.
6. Once the dye is set, wash the fabric as necessary to remove the remainder of the resist.