

Jo Volley's Walnut Ink Recipe.

Walnut ink is a lavish dark brown, possesses good archival properties and was known to be used by the Old Masters.

Most of the recipe's I've found were for black walnuts, *juglans nigra*, which are apparently at their most rich in pigment at the end of autumn when very ripe. The husk (outer shell) of the walnut contains a strong dye called juglone and also a certain amount of tannin.

I didn't have any black walnuts but I had quite a lot of white walnuts, *juglans regia*, gifted by some neighbours from their orchard in France.



So, this is what I did.

I crushed the walnut shells, placed in a pot, covered in water (distilled preferably) and left to soak for a few days until a small amount of colour leached out into the water.  
Image below:



At this point I gently simmered on and off for approx. 8 hours until the colour turned to a richer darker brown.

I then left to soak again for a couple of days after which I put through a sieve to remove any of the husks.

Image below:



I then reduced the liquid by about half or maybe a third until it took on a rich brown appearance and more like the viscosity of ink.

Image below:



After which I poured through a coffee filter-lined funnel into a clean glass jar adding a small amount of gum arabic to enrich the viscosity. I also added a clove as a fungicide but if you do get mould on the ink, don't worry, just remove it.

You can also add a vinegar that influences the colour but I haven't experimented with that yet. You can also add shellac flakes and borax to make it waterproof.

I've made walnut ink several times now and varied the amount of steeping, simmering and reducing and the results are pretty much the same.

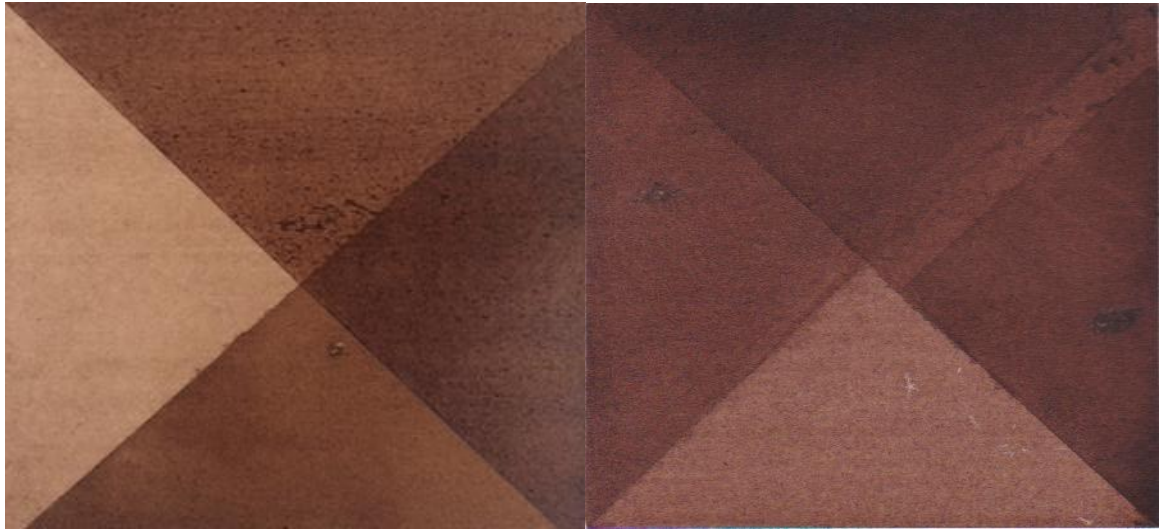
Warning, it is a very powerful colourant and can stain, so you may wish to wear gloves and only use an old pan. You also need to be patient!

Below are some examples of my walnut ink.

The first image shows 7 layers of ink, from before the liquid was reduced until the seventh stage which contains gum arabic.



Further images below:



Jo Volley 2020