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Earth Creations® Clay-Dyed Apparel Offers Customers a Sustainable Alternative to Conventional Clothing Dyes

Company Digs Up and Improves Upon Ancient Process to Create Eco-Safe, Beautiful Hues

BESSEMER, AL (June 1, 2010) – In 1992, Joy Maples set out on a serendipitous mountain bike ride that would eventually lead the way to her livelihood.

Hitting the trail post-storm, she ended up covered in red clay, and despite multiple wears and washes of her shirt, socks and shoes, the clothing remained permanently mud-stained. Her future husband and business partner, Martin Ledvina, a chemical engineer with a curious nature, became intrigued with the strength of the clay and began experimenting with purposefully dyeing clothing with dirt.



In 1996, Joy and Martin introduced the first [Earth Creations](http://EarthCreations.com) clay-dyed T-shirts. Today, the Bessemer, AL-based brand offers an extensive line of imprinted sportswear for men, women and children and is the *only* company offering a complete collection of clay-dyed women’s casual wear.



Still using the original clay-dyeing process Martin initially developed, the company renders 12 rich, eco-safe colors on sustainable fabrics such as organic cotton, hemp and bamboo to create its clothing lines.

Offering consumers an alternative to conventionally-produced dyes, which present environmental and personal health dangers, Earth Creations has borrowed the ancient clay-dyeing tradition from centuries past and made some key improvements to satisfy contemporary customer lifestyles.

“Dyeing with mud, clay and dirt goes back to the origins of textile use,” said Ledvina. “When developing our dyeing process, we have learned from these ancient techniques, but have taken it a step further in regard to washfastness, durability, application to knitted fabrics and the range of colors offered.”

Gentle to nature, Earth Creations’ improvements to the clay’s dye qualities are made with natural and biodegradable materials, a far cry from the toxic byproducts produced in the manufacture of synthetic dyes. And also unlike conventional practices, Earth Creations’ processes require no kitchen salt – a substance that causes irreversible harm to the ecosystems in rivers, lakes and other water sources when released from commercial dye houses.



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The apparel is also gentle to the humans who wear it.

“We often get emails from people who have allergies to conventional dyestuffs, but can wear our clothing without any problems,” Ledvina said.

Although Joy’s initial clay-dyed clothing experience was accidental in nature, the Earth Creations process is now anything but. The company looks for clay sources that will yield consistent color so that it may be reproduced easily, with most “harvests” occurring in the southeastern United States. And while there are a finite number of clay colors available in nature, Earth Creations creates fresh new hues for its seasonal lines by developing unique clay blends and consistently seeking new clay sources.



“When we started the business, we always had a bucket and shovel in our car, in case we came across an interesting color of dirt,” Ledvina said.

Once harvested, the clay typically needs to be ground to create a uniform, reproducible color. Each dye load is created with a certain weight specific to the type of fabric and garment, and a biodegradable fixative is added to improve washfastness. At the end of the cycle, water is extracted from the garments and they head to gas dryers.

The finished apparel *requires no special care* – it can be machine washed and dried – and the clay’s natural affinity to fabric, in addition to the fixative added, makes fading minimal, much like a favorite pair of jeans.

Many Earth Creations fans can’t get enough of the clay-dyed color, and it’s not unusual for the company to receive samples from customers’ own backyards, hoping their dirt may be considered as the next new hue.

“We’ve received clay from a car salesman’s yard, local potters, and more,” Ledvina said. “It’s interesting how the idea of clay dye entices people.”

Earth Creations clothing can be found at more than 600 retailers nationwide, from Whole Foods to Dillard’s. To learn more about the company, locate a retailer or shop online, visit www.earthcreations.net.

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