

# Recipe (c. 1400)

Another black is made of the tendrils or young shoots of the vine (1), which are to be burnt, and when burnt, thrown into water, and quenched, and then ground like other black pigments. This colour is very black and transparent (magro), and it is one of the most perfect pigments we have.

## Handout instructions

### Source

Cennini, Cennino, c. 1400, *Il Libro dell' Art*e. Transcription and translation in: Mary Philadelphia Merrifield, 1844. A Treatise on Painting. Written Bu Cennino Cennini in 1434. And First Published in Italian in 1821, with an Introduction and Notes, by Signor, Tambroni: Containing Practical Directions for Painting in Fresco, Secco, Oil, and Distemper, with the Art of Gilding and Illuminating Manuscripts. London: Edward Lumley. p. 21.

## Ingredients & equipment

Vine tendrils Wooden fire Water in a bowl

### Preparation steps

- (1) Collect vine tendrils
- (2) Light a fire
- (3) Lay the tendrils onto the fire
- (4) Take the burnt tendrils out
- (5) Transfer them directly into water

### Date & Place

Ellingshausen (Germany), August 2020.



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that the hand may hold and guide it at pleasure (3). Then take some of the black (or of any other colour), about the size of a walnut, and put it on the slab, and with that stone which you hold in your hand break the pigment into small pieces. Put some clean water, either from a river, a fountain, or a well, to the colour, and grind it well for half an hour, or an hour, or as long as you please; but know, that if you were to grind it for a year, so much the blacker and better would be the colour. Then take a flat piece of wood, part of which is pared thin like the blade of a knife (4), and with this blade collect the colour neatly; keep it liquid, and not too dry, that it may flow well on the stone, and be thoroughly ground; then collect it carefully. Put it then into a small vase, and pour water on it till the vase is full; and in this manner keep it always soft, and well covered from the dust, and from all other dirt, that is, in a little box adapted to hold vessels of

#### CHAP. 37. How to make several kinds of black.

Remember that there are several black pigments, one of which is a soft black stone, and the colour is opaque. I must inform you that transparent colours are better than those which have much body, except that in laying on gold, bole, or verde terra, when you have pictures to gild, the richer the colour is, the brighter will be the gold. Let us leave this

subject. Another black is made of the tendrils or young shoots of the vine (1), which are to be burnt, and when burnt, thrown into water, and quenched, and then ground like other black pigments. This colour is very black and transparent (magro), and it is one of the most perfect pigments we have.

Another black is made of the skins of almonds, or the kernels of peaches; this also makes a perfect and fine black. Another

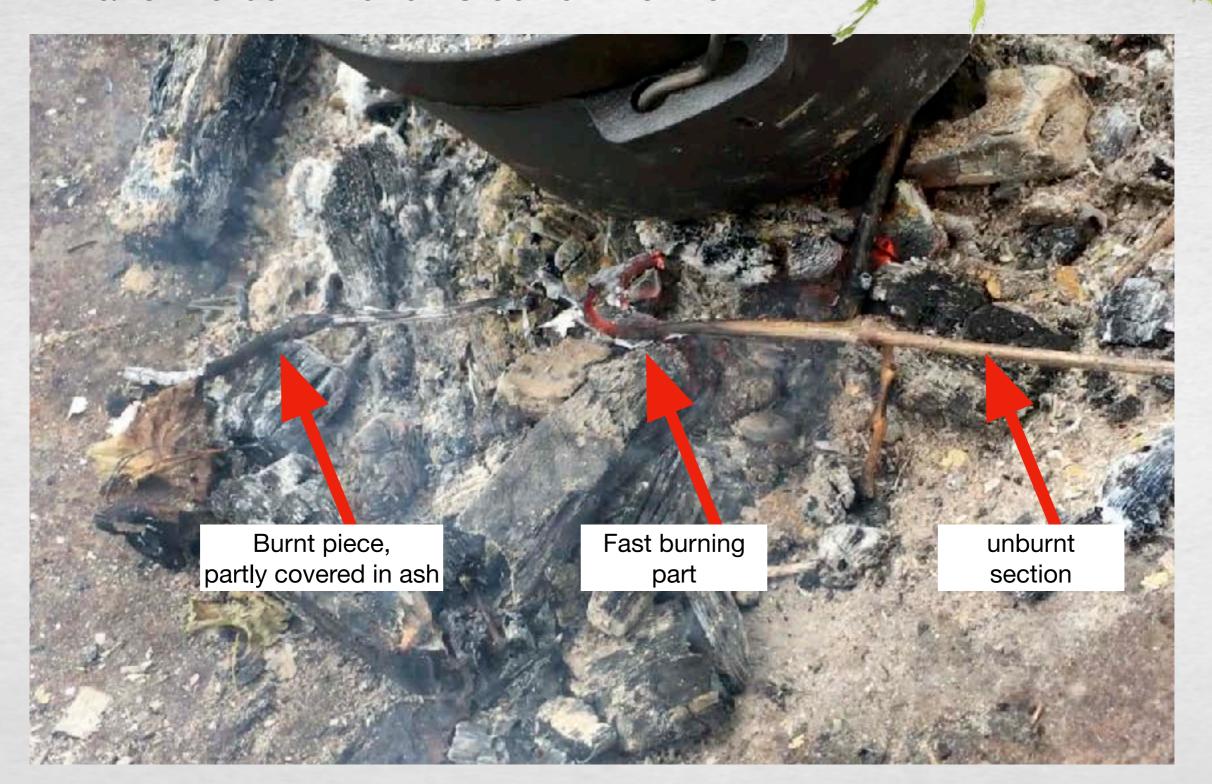
# Photo report: step-by-step reconstruction

1. Collect vine vendrils and put them on a fire



# Photo report: step-by-step reconstruction

### 2. Take the burnt tendrils out of the fire



# What did we learn during the reconstruction?

## This experiment failed.

Fresh vine tendrils take quite a while until they ignite. After some time during combustion, suddenly the ends of the tendrils start to burn extremely fast, while other parts remain unburnt.

At this point it is difficult to judge when to take the burnt tendrils out of the fire. When attempting to remove them, they directly disintegrate into frail fragments which fall back into the fire.

Also, the fragments are covered in ash which would interfere with the final colour.

Burning larger amounts of tendrils as vine-growers would have at their disposal after pruning might improve the result.











