

What Acids Do You Have Around the House?



Vinegar, cranberry juice, apple juice

You probably have some vinegar in your kitchen. Vinegar is pH 2.4 and contains acetic acid. Vinegar is cheap and plentiful. The stains from henna mixed with vinegar tend slightly to a brownish tone when they mature. The only problem with using vinegar to mix henna paste is that the smell of vinegar can be very unpleasant.¹

You may have some cranberry juice, pH 2.3, in the house; cranberry juice is convenient but not a bargain. Cranberry juice contains quinic, malic and citric acids² and is sour enough to make a hydrogen-rich paste. The color of cranberry juice will not make your henna stain more of a dark red color. The anthocyanins and natural anti-oxidants in cranberry juice will slightly deter the subsequent darkening, and the stain will stay more in the mid-red range without going brown.

Apple Juice, 3.4 pH, contains malic acid. Apple juice is convenient, sour enough to make a good henna paste, and is very gentle on hair. Apple juice also contains enzymes that break henna's cellulosic material down a bit faster than some other juices, so the dye release may go faster than you expect. Both apple and cranberry juice henna mixes tend to be sticky (because of the fructose in the juice) and to have a booze-y smell. Both apple and cranberry juice mixes hold well in the refrigerator for several days because they contain antioxidants.³

¹ Everyone has a slightly different perception of scent, but it is this author's opinion that the smell of a vinegar-henna mix has a 'three buzzard rating' warning for disagreeable smell.

² Forney, Charles F., Wilhelmina Kalt, Michael A. Jordan, Melinda R. Vinqvist-Tymchuk, and Sherry A.E. Fillmore. 2012. "Blueberry and cranberry fruit composition during development." *Journal Of Berry Research* 2, no. 3: 169-177. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed September 22, 2014).

³ Apple juice and cranberry juice mixes, accidentally left in the back of the refrigerator for several days seem to give more of a non-darkening bright rosy-orange stain than you would expect.

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