

Power Plant

Beauty secrets found in nature

“Until man duplicates a blade of grass, nature can laugh at his so-called scientific knowledge. Remedies from chemicals will never stand in favour compared with the products of nature, the living cell of the plant, the final result of the rays of the sun, the mother of all life.”

~ T. A. Edison

It was not that long ago that we extracted precious ingredients from the leaves, fruit and seeds of plants to make elixirs for beauty and well-being. Somewhere along the way we turned away from these time-honoured traditions and began to doubt the efficacy and power of natural ingredients. Instead we came to favour synthetic ingredients created through a complex series of chemical reactions.

Studies estimate the average woman applies 126 different chemicals each morning, with some of them not even listed on the packaging. Many synthetic ingredients are derived from petroleum and lie on the skin's surface protecting against moisture loss but failing to nourish, hydrate and replenish the skin's oils.

In our quest for eternal youth and beauty, we naively trust a cosmetics industry that uses a myriad of cheap and chemical ingredients at a high cost to consumers and the environment. Even the savviest of customer can be fooled by make-up masquerading as 'healthy', since manufacturers have the freedom to use unregulated terms 'organic' and 'natural' as they like. The good news is people are waking up to 'greenwashing' and turning to companies who put people before profit, and harness active ingredients derived from plants to provide cosmetics in harmony with ourselves and the earth.



The Greek word *phyto* means plant. Phytocosmetics are healthy, non-toxic active plant extracts that provide natural and effective skin, hair and personal care and that are compatible with the skin's natural oils. The plant species used have been studied by experts in the fields of horticulture, pharmacology, ethnobotany and phytochemistry.

What sounds better than using products containing active plant ingredients? The plant world is so wonderfully diverse and

adaptive that it has found its way back into lipsticks, shampoos, serums, moisturisers and perfumes – just like Mother Nature intended.

French family-owned luxury cosmetic brand, Sisley, calls their approach to cosmetic skin care “Phytocosmetology”. Native plant species are selected for their specific outcome on the skin, and active ingredients are extracted and combined with other plant extracts for optimal results. In contrast to the toxic whitening

products on the market, Sisley's Phyto-Blanc collection evens skin pigmentation using extracts of white mulberry, scutellaria, lemon, phytosqualane from olive trees and essential oils of lavender and marjoram. One of Sisley's Cult products is All Day All Year, an anti-ageing shield that contains no less than 10 phyto-extracts including juniper, sage, and sesame to protect the skin from the elements.

Gwyneth Paltrow joined forces with phytocosmetic brand Juice Beauty in 2016 as the creative director behind a high-performance make-up collection called Phyto-Pigments. Based on plant-derived phytopigments, primers use coconut alkanes as an emollient alternative to silicones, while blushes, bronzers and pressed powders contain organic grape seed instead of petroleum for antioxidant benefits. Similarly eye pencils and mascaras use phytopigments instead of petroleum combustion carbon black, and lip products soften, hydrate and beautify with pigments comprising pomegranate, rose, eggplant, Moringa and Eclipta daisy.

As a child I would make perfume by futilely adding crushed rose petals to a water base. The synthetic perfumes available today are a far cry from the delicate and natural scents I aspired to create as a child, and are filled with toxic petroleum and coal-derived synthetic chemicals, as well as countless other ingredients that have been linked to hormone, endocrine and reproductive system disruptions.

Nannette Pallrand, founder of organic perfume brand Rich Hippie, says, “There is nothing more beautiful than an all-natural perfume where you can actually smell the real flowers as opposed to a



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~ Nannette Pallrand

man-made chemical perfume that uses synthetic versions of flowers concocted in a laboratory. Studies have even shown that a real perfume actually creates a chemical reaction in the body that uplifts the senses whereas a man-made, synthetic perfume brings the senses down.”

Often overlooked, the fragrances added to many cosmetics are a cause for concern

because the long list of chemicals hidden behind the deceptively innocent terms 'parfum' or 'fragrance' are not required to be listed since they are deemed proprietary cocktails used to create a scent. With the vast selection of pure organic essential oils available on the market, consider the simplicity of using a few drops of jasmine, sandalwood or rose directly or added to your body moisturiser.

In response to clients experiencing scalp irritation and hair shampoo fatigue from the heavy synthetic chemicals being offered by commercial hair care brands, hairstylist and trichologist, Nigel Russell developed Holistic Hair. With a minimum of 98 per cent plant-derived ingredients, Holistic Hair products incorporate phyto-ingredients such as “lavender oil for its anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antifungal, antiseptic and oil production balancing properties; apple cider vinegar for its antioxidant and probiotic properties that balance the pH of the scalp and soften and exfoliate its delicate skin; and neroli and chamomile essential oils to nourish the hair shaft and add vitality and shine.” Their Pure Shampoo is suitable for all hair types including scalp conditions like psoriasis, with phytonutrients from aloe vera to moisturise and relieve itching and inflammation, and New Zealand manuka honey NPA5+ for its ability to ward off infection and assist healing.

The huge body of scientific evidence builds trust in the potency and efficacy that nature and phytocosmetics can deliver. Don't be fooled by products that declare themselves as 'organic' or 'natural' and learn to decode the ingredients labels by using reputable online resources like Campaign for Safe Cosmetics (safecosmetics.org). 🌿