

greener pastures

Chock-full of good-for-you ingredients, the latest beauty brews take their cues from Mother Nature.

BY DANA WOOD

It's not a competition, but if it were, Europe would have it all over the United States on the "green beauty" front. When comparing the list of banned chemical ingredients across the pond (450 at last count) with ours (a mere nine), there's little question which personal-care agenda is more *naturel*.

But with mounting pressure from environmental groups to rid American beauty products of toxic ingredients, some of the biggest companies in the business have already started moving in a greener direction. The latest wave in beauty—for the entire family, including Fluffy and Rover—pairs the best of nature with cutting-edge science.

A case in point is Grassroots, a lineup of head-to-toe potions sold at Kohl's. With monikers like Baby Your Belly (a stretch-mark cream laced with organic ginger) and Pet Project (a pooch shampoo infused with cedar and orange), the label is aimed squarely at an increasingly chemical-phobic public. (For eight red-flag ingredients found in cosmetics, see sidebar.)

Despite the healthy bent, in no way is Grassroots positioning itself as chemical-free. "We describe this line as 'naturally sourced,'" says brand head Debbie Druker. "We're trying to be very honest with the customer, and you can't have



MAGIC MUSHROOMS

In a loft carpeted with grass earmarked for the Central Park Zoo, integrative health guru Andrew Weil hopped on stage at a recent press event and spoke candidly. "Aging is natural and inevitable," he said. "If you set yourself up in opposition to aging, you're in a wrong relationship with nature." Clearly Weil has given the topic thought; his latest book, *Healthy Aging: A Lifelong Guide to Your Physical and Spiritual Well-Being* (Knopf, 2005), is an ode to growing old gracefully.

Partnering with Origins on a new line of skincare and ingestible supplements, Weil tapped the power of mushrooms and Asian herbs and spices. The Dr. Andrew Weil for Origins products aim to short-circuit what he considers a key factor in age-related illness: inflammation. While it's a normal healing response to minor woes like a bruised knee, chronic inflammation—triggered by poor diets, inactivity, and stress—has been linked to heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

Along with staying active and eating right, it can't hurt to slather on one of Weil's skin potions. "I don't put myself out there as an authority on beauty," he said, "but here's what I do know: Beauty is a reflection of health."

At top: Avon Anew Alternative Intensive Age Treatment (\$32, avon.com); Dr. Andrew Weil for Origins Plantidote Mega-Mushroom Face Serum (\$65, origins.com); Old Navy ONBody by Kiss My Face Gentle Exfoliating Body Scrub (\$8, oldnavy.com); Carol's Daughter Rosemary and Sage Herbal Foot Bath (\$8, carolsdaughter.com); The Healing Garden Organics Wild Honey Body Wash (\$8, target.com)

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completely natural products that sit on shelves. Products have to have some type of preservatives so you don't have to store them in the refrigerator and then throw them out in two weeks."

Another line, Carol's Daughter, actually does recommend refrigeration for two of its handcrafted skincare items. But while the Avocado & Almond Face Scrub and Strawberry & Lavender Clay Face Scrub are perishable and shipped in ice, the rest of the products derive stability from low-tech preservatives. Think grapefruit seed extract and antioxidant vitamins rather than demonized stabilizers like parabens.

Lisa Price, the naturals-obsessed founder of Carol's Daughter, believes only products with food ingredients need to be pumped full of preservatives. Still, she's careful not to overproduce; if the products aren't sitting in a warehouse for years, they don't need as much chemical stabilization. "We produce in smaller batches," says Price. "We forecast based on sales."

Jessica Iclisoy, a Beverly Hills mother of two and founder of California Baby, is another fan of micro-manufacturing. Her line, geared to tykes, pregnant women, and sensitive types, is built around either organic or sustainably grown ingredients that are sourced globally. "It doesn't make sense to try to grow lavender in rainy Seattle," she



says, "so we get ours from Provence."

With its Anew Alternative Intensive Age Treatment, Avon is diving into the burgeoning "herbaceuticals" category. After focus groups showed a growing desire for naturals, the company partnered with medicinal plant experts in China and Thailand. The result is a blend of Szechuan lovage root and neem flower, Eastern herbs lauded for their alleged ability to zap lines and wrinkles.

Once found only in health food stores, holistic beauty brands are now stocked in the country's biggest chains. Itching to try The Healing Garden Organics? Pop in to Target. Need a Kiss My Face fix? Head to Old Navy for ONBody, a joint venture between the beloved natural beauty line and the cheap-chic fashion retailer. While not technically organic like Kiss My Face, ONBody nonetheless offers a blast of wholesome beauty amid towering stacks of value-priced togs.

Call them the "almost-organics"—beautifiers that straddle the fence between an all-natural agenda and those that require a PhD in microbiology to decipher the label. "Natural products are becoming more mainstream," says Grassroots' Druker. "Moms today are concerned not only with what they're putting on their own bodies but also on the bodies of their kids and pets." 🚫

BAD BATCH

Common cosmetic ingredients with troubled track records

1 COAL TAR

Functions as: Hair colorant, treatment for dandruff and skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, and seborrheic dermatitis
Often found in: Permanent hair dyes, medicated shampoos, cleansing bars, creams
Suspected side effects: Skin irritation, cancer

2 DEA (DIETHANOLAMINE)

Functions as: Solvent and pH adjuster. While DEA itself is rarely used solo, it plays a role in cocamide DEA, a common foaming agent.
Often found in: Shampoos, shaving creams, body washes, bath oils, facial cleansers
Suspected side effects: Cancer (via the formation of compounds called nitrosamines)

3 FORMALDEHYDE

Functions as: Solvent, antibacterial, preservative
Often found in: Nail lacquers and strengtheners, hair-growth formulas
Suspected side effects: Skin irritation, cancer

4 LEAD ACETATE

Functions as: Topical astringent, colorant in hair dyes and in yellow cosmetic pigment
Often found in: Hair dye, skin ointments
Suspected side effects: Skin irritation, cancer

5 PARABENS

Function as: Preservatives
Often found in: Shampoo, shaving cream, deodorant
Suspected side effect: Breast cancer

6 PHTHALATES

Function as: Solvents, plasticizers, fixatives, antifoaming agents
Often found in: Fragrance, nail lacquer, hairspray
Suspected side effect: Cancer

7 PROPYLENE GLYCOL

Functions as: Humectant, moisture-absorber, stabilizer at extreme temperatures
Often found in: Foundation, aerosol deodorant, mascara, aftershave, lipstick
Suspected side effects: Skin irritation, cancer

8 SODIUM LAURYL (& LAURETH) SULFATE

Function as: Detergents
Often found in: Bubble bath, hand lotion, toothpaste
Suspected side effects: Cancer

FOR MORE INFO: Environmental Working Group (ewg.org); *A Consumer's Dictionary of Cosmetic Ingredients* (Three Rivers Press, 2005)