

Purely Intentional

Born-of-the-earth products are proving irresistible to A-list clients.

—Jeryl E. Spear

Myrrh extract. Murumuru butter. Tamanu oil. Top-tier consumers are having a love affair with pure-and-natural beauty products. Whether this trend toward nature's best is due to concerns about global warming, worsening allergies and skin sensitivities, or simply the belief that when it comes to beauty Mother Nature knows best, a growing number of high-end salon clients are baring their green streak by clamoring for products with a natural slant.

Growing at a pace that promises to one day eclipse the natural food sector, demand for natural-based beauty products is soaring. Formulas that kick chemicals like parabens and sulfates to the curb and are infused with botanical extracts and minerals that gently cleanse, heal and moisturize clients' most precious beauty assets, have become the expected standard for natural-based products. Moving beyond these parameters, natural-based beauty companies are striving to develop more effective synergistic blends of natural ingredients that will allow their products to go toe-to-toe with the best chemically enriched beauty goods on the planet.



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Don't Panic...It's Organic

Organic products are the current gold standard for natural-based formulations. Simply put, farmers grow organic botanicals without the use of pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, genetically modified organisms or ionizing radiation. According to organic.org, organic growing method eliminates all synthetic chemicals and suspect processing methods. Sewage sludge (often used as a soil modifier) is also a no-no for those who crave pure and natural products.

But do two or three organic products found among a long list of natural and not-so-natural ingredients really make a difference? Is there really such a thing as an all-natural, 100-percent organic beauty product? Because government regulations are still more than a little iffy about natural cosmetics labeling claims, the answers to these questions still lie in the mind (and pocketbook) of the beholder. What we can tell you is how the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) certifies and regulates organic claims:

100-Percent Organic: According to the USDA's national organic standard, products labeled as 100-percent organic can only contain organically produced ingredients.

Organic: Companies can label their products organic if 95 percent of the ingredients are organically grown and the remaining 5 percent come from nonorganic ingredients that are on the approved National List provided by the USDA.

Made With Organic Ingredients: Products must be made with at least 70-percent organic ingredients, which must be listed on the back of the package. The remaining 30 percent of the nonorganic ingredients must be on the National List.

NOTE: Because the organic standards set forth by the USDA have been developed for agricultural products and its applicability to nonfood products can be limiting, some beauty companies submit their products to other association standards, such as EcoCert (ecocert.com).

Photography by Brooks Ayala

Tea For You

Tea tree oil fights bacteria, fungi and viruses. It's derived from the tea tree, a plant that's native to Australia. The indigenous people of the region have traditionally used tea tree oil to treat a number of skin conditions.

In modern formulations, tea tree oil is used in many acne preparations to reduce the redness, swelling and lesions often associated with this common skin condition. In haircare preparations, tea tree oils can be highly effective in treating dandruff and itchy scalp. Nature-loving moms throughout the world also use tea tree to repel head lice, a common infestation among young school children who love to rub heads, use each other's brushes and hang their coats so closely together that the classroom closet turns a tidy habit into a lice superhighway.



Biodynamics: The New Natural Frontier



The next step up in natural ingredients is biodynamic farming. According to the National Sustainable Agricultural Information Service, this pure and natural method to growing raw ingredients for cosmetics (and food) is an organic approach based on the work of Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner. In addition to practicing crop rotation and composting to ensure a rich, balanced soil, biodynamics uses special plant, animal and mineral preparations, and the rhythmic influences of the sun, moon, planets and stars to create a thriving agrarian ecosystem.