



# Chinese BEAUTY

To create and maintain naturally healthy good looks, take a leaf out of the beauty books of the Far East. By June Blythe

**R**oots and herbs have been used in Chinese medicine for more than 4,500 years, and much has been discovered about their healing properties.

Recently they have been used in the West as alternatives to conventional medicine.

People now turn to them for beauty as well as healing. For example, women who traditionally picked ginseng had the usual signs of ageing on their faces and necks, but their hands, which had been in contact with the root, remained smooth. Tests were carried out on ginseng, and it was found to have anti-ageing properties. But for the Chinese, beauty comes with health, so many of their beauty regimes concentrate on your inner, as well as outer, wellbeing.

## INSIDE AND OUT

Julia Kwan, of The Way of Wu at Coopers (Covent Garden) has internal and external beauty products based on the traditional Chinese remedies she was brought up with. She always treats herself before going to a conventional doctor. 'I was brought up with these remedies,' she says. 'My family used them and I prefer to use something

natural.' She explains how, in Chinese medicine, the physician will examine the whole body - taking the pulse, looking at the tongue and feeling the organs - and ask questions about lifestyle before prescribing, which could be acupuncture, acupressure or herb/root teas. When a mix of herbs and/or roots is prescribed, they have to be boiled for several hours, strained and cooled.

## TEA TREATMENT

Kwan realises that, with our busy modern lifestyles, most of us do not have time to do this, so she has prepared three teas, mixed with herbs that are based on traditional remedies. The result comes in tea bags, and all that is required is to pour on freshly boiled water and leave for 15-20 minutes before drinking. These Wu Ts are described as 'internal' skincare. All are based on traditional remedies and are made in China. Because the herbs (and mixes) have been tested over thousands

of years, Kwan uses herself as a guinea pig. Morning T may help lift a 'morning after' feeling; Meal T should be drunk between or after meals to purify the body, and therefore the complexion; and Night T, if taken one to two hours before bed, promotes better sleep.

Green tea has been used as a medicine, internally and externally, to treat ailments such as nervous exhaustion, headaches and rheumatic complaints, and can also be used for beauty. By drinking it, the tea can help us relax and rid our bodies of impurities, and can also be made into cosmetic preparations for the skin (see box, right). Also available are cleansers, toners and moisturisers, including the Wu Morning Mask to beat a 'morning after' feeling or jet lag. It is a mixture of Chinese herbs, including ginseng and white jade powder, and contains invigorating menthol, plus a special oil that Julia's late grandmother used for motion sickness.

## ZONE OUT

Chinese ingredients and philosophy are also used by Molton Brown. MD Dale Daxon Bowers found that zone therapy and pressure massage broke down toxins and released an energy flow through her body. 'It is similar to studying magnets at school. We learn that energy flows through metal: why shouldn't it flow through us?' It

is all about looking at medicine, and beauty, from a preventative viewpoint.

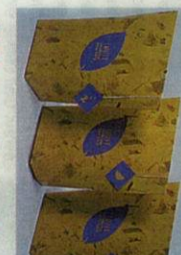
Molton Brown's Foot and Face Zone creams come with diagrams for acupressure points for self massage to help release tension and promote whole body health, as well as conditioning the skin.

To ease tension and moisturise feet, Molton Brown's Foot Zone-Reflexology cream contains Mu Gua (Chinese quince) and San Ren (grains of Paradise fruit) and should be applied using the acupressure massage instructions to stimulate the body's energy pathways to help promote good health.

The Face Zone - Overnight with Mei Gui Hua (Chinese Rose), together with DIY acupressure massage, helps stimulate circulation and release facial tension to give a smoother complexion.

Relaxing Yuan Zhi Bathing Gel uses this herbal extract from southern China to help soothe the spirit, so is ideal before bed or after a hard day at the office. Molton Brown's Ultra Light Face Hydrator for men contains Bai Ji (Chinese Violet Orchid), which stops bleeding in case of cuts, as well as moisturising macadamia nut oil.

**Chinese beauty regimes focus on inner, as well as outer, wellbeing**



## BEAT BEAUTY PROBLEMS

Mebo's treatment creams are based on Chinese remedies and plant extracts to help beauty and skin problems such as eczema, scarring and acne. The range was developed by Professor Xu Rongxiang, who comes from a family of Chinese herbalists, but is also trained in Western medicine. He believes Chinese remedies are useful because the plants, herbs, seeds and fibres come from the earth, and biologists see human and plant tissues as having the same form of growth. He started to develop the range after a large explosion in China, which left many with serious burns. Rongxiang would place the plant extract directly onto the skin, and from this he developed the Moist Exposed Burn Ointment. For blackheads, acne and facial

blemishes, try Ackey Cream from Mebo which contains extracts of cactus roots and sesame oil, and gets deep into pores. The cactus takes the sting out of the acne, reduces redness, and helps unclog pores. To smooth, soften and condition scarred skin, try Mebo's Scar Lotion, which also uses cactus extracts and sesame oil. Mebo products are the first based on Chinese remedies to be available over the counter at chemists and pharmacists.

## GENTLE HAIR CARE

Powdered extracts from the fruit of the shikakai tree have been used for over a thousand years in the Far East to clean the hair and scalp without stripping away natural oils. In fact, the word 'shikakai' translates as 'fruit for the hair'. The dried, powdered fruit is mixed with water to make a paste which lathers gently when worked into the scalp, eliminating the need for harsh soaps, detergents and foaming agents.

Since 1975 Shikai, based in California, has been making shampoos and conditioners using shikakai and other natural ingredients. To gently clean hair, use Shikai Original Formula Shampoo. Shikai also has shampoos for dry, fine and permed hair, all of which contain shikakai extract. The shampoos are soap- and detergent-free. To condition hair, use Shikai Amla Conditioner, which combines shikakai extract with the oil of the amla fruit. Amla is an Indian fruit tree, and the oil has been used for centuries to treat hair and scalp problems, so now there is a conditioner that combines remedies from two ancient cultures.

## Make a green tea face pack

Take 120-150ml water, 15ml green tea, 45ml wheatgerm and 15ml honey. Boil the water and leave to cool for 5 minutes, pour onto tea and leave for 5 more minutes, then strain and cool. Meanwhile, carefully mix the wheatgerm with the honey to make a paste, and mix in the tea brew. Spread onto clean skin, avoiding eyes and brows.

Leave for 20 minutes, wash off with lukewarm water and then rinse your face with cold water.   
 ■ From Green Tea for Health and Vitality by Dr Jong Zhitau (Sterling, £3.99). Available from HH Bookshop inc! p40; see page 87.

**Where to buy it** ■ Molton Brown Prices range from £14 to £23. Facials using products based on Chinese remedies are available. Call 0171 625 6550 for further information ■ Wu products Prices range from £13.50 to £23.50. Available from Liberty, Harrods or by mail order on 0171 240 6313. A range of facials, with prices starting from £20, are available at The Way of Wu at Coopers, 27 Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, London WC2E 7JS. Call 0171 240 7170 for further information ■ Mebo All products £5 inc! p40. Call 0800 389 8750 ■ Shikai products Haircare prices range from £9.20 to £9.50. Call 0181 420 6474 for stockists and mail order, or Freshlands in Camden 0171 428 7575.