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Clean Beauty Looks to Botanical Extracts

Herbal remedies from plant extracts are resonating with consumers who prefer natural solutions for skin-care needs.

By [Vicki M. Young](#) on September 4, 2018



 The skin-care and lip lines from Lumavera.
George Chinsee

The wellness remedies once considered “home remedies” or the realm of the village herbalist have now gone mainstream.

Cecilia Gates, founder and creative director of Gates Creative, said the growing interest is part of the clean [beauty](#) trend where consumers have become more aware of the chemicals used in the products they put on their skin.

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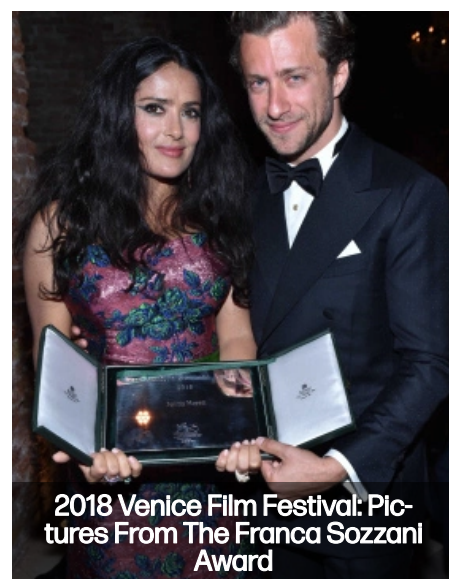
“Consumers want safer ingredients in place of the chemicals that have been used,” she said, noting that younger generations have been spearheading the push toward being better informed and more environmentally conscious consumers.

She said fashion has already increased transparency on the supply chain and manufacturing side, such as [wastes from dyes and finishes for denim products and their impact on clean water](#). That in turn has also fueled consumer awareness and is now hitting the [beauty](#) sector. Further, smaller brands are nimbler than many of their older counterparts and have taken the lead in providing products that are resonating with the current consumer mind-set.

One of those brands is four-year-old luxury skin-care brand [Lumavera](#), which uses botanical extracts in its lines. The products are based on its core premise of using “superfoods” for skin care. The brand was founded by David Vargas, a former farmer and rancher, who said the company is self-funded.

Vargas got the idea from watching his mom use prickly pear cactus and aloe, as well as food from the family farm, to feed her family and take care of their skin-care needs. And he was insistent that aloe is the first — and major — ingredient in many of the products in the skin-care line. The tag line for Lumavera is “cultivating beauty from the ground up,” and it relies on a veggie blend and a fruit blend. The veggie blend includes ingredients such as tomatoes, spinach, kale and brussels sprouts. The fruit blend counts citrus extracts, argan oil and aloe leaf extracts as key ingredients. According to Vargas, plant extracts from lycopene can protect one from UVB rays when applied to the skin, while greens such as spinach and kale help with detoxification.

Given the use of botanical extracts and promise of “no parabens, sulfates, petrochemicals, harsh synthetic chemicals, artificial colors or fragrances,” the line has a shorter shelf life — about a year — than many of its larger luxury and mass-prestige competitor brands. Many on the market, due to chemicals and preservatives, have a shelf life of two years from the time of purchase provided the product remains unopened. Price points range from \$30 to \$130 for the skin-care products. The brand earlier this year introduced a lipstick and lip gloss lines, both of which also include plant extracts from fruits and vegetables.



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The company also gives back to society. Its “Seeding Luxury” program provides elementary school garden programs with seeds so students can get educated about food and eating, and begin to make healthier lifestyle choices at a young age.

Shankara Naturals strives to combine the Eastern thinking of India’s Ayurvedic medicine with Western know-how of actives and antioxidants formulated for three mind-body types: Pitta, Vata and Kapha. Symptoms related to one type are different from symptoms for the other two.

Products include a skin-care line, aromatherapy and other products such as a muscle release oil. Price points range from \$18 to \$75.

According to Gina Preziosa, vice president of sales and marketing, the line was started in 2001 and counts private investors as its backers. The idea for the line was inspired by Indian humanitarian leader and spiritual Master Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. The products are made in small batches using synergistic blends at its own facility in Reagan Wells, Tex., and are cold-processed to preserve the nutrients in the line. The company also recommends that the products are used within six months of opening. The line is pH balanced and 100 percent chemical free and cruelty free. The company also donates 100 percent of its net profits to humanitarian causes.

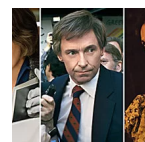


A selection from the Shankara line. George Chinsee

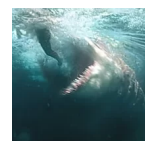
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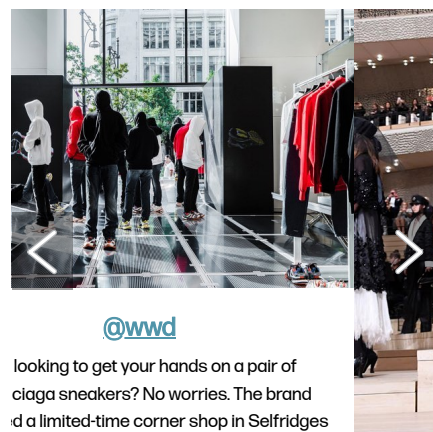
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According to a BCC Research report from December, there's been a rising interest in botanics, particularly in the area of botanical drugs, with the global market expected to reach \$39.6 billion by 2022. Kim Lawson, an analyst at BCC Research, said, "Many companies are realizing that a botanical drug may not only be more effective, but could be the preferred option compared with a chemical-based counterpart."

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Kamedis Dermatology is among the first to use Chinese herbal remedies to treat skin disorders such as eczema, acne and dandruff. The over-the-counter products combine traditional Chinese botanicals with Western active ingredients, and were introduced to the U.S. market in February. Pop-up events have been held at select Sam's Club locations this summer. The products are free of ingredients — benzoyl peroxide, sodium lauryl sulfate, parabens, steroids, dyes and coal tar — that many consumers have increasingly sought to avoid.

Roni Kramer, a health care provider and licensed acupuncturist, began working with private investors in Tel Aviv in 2003. She declined to disclose the names of the Israeli investors, but said they are "people who are very familiar and very enthusiastic" about the use of traditional Chinese medicinal herbs. The company has just started holding discussions with venture capital firms in the U.S., with an eye toward a fund-raising round possibly in early 2019.

Instead of relying on one big active ingredient doing all the work — the traditional process in Western medicine — Chinese herbalism is more focused on using the right percentage of a combination of ingredients. Among some of the ingredients used are root of rhubarb in a foot gel to reduce inflammation, and purslane in the acne line to soothe the skin. The company established a facility in China where it does the botanical extractions. The products are made in the U.S. at a facility in New Jersey. Because the products are formulated for medical grade over-the-counter, they first had to pass FDA muster before they could be sold in the U.S.

Israel and Taiwan are the brand's most mature overseas markets, and Kramer said the line about a year ago began distribution in China. "The Chinese people understand traditional Chinese medicinal herbs. They know the look and feel and science behind our products," she said.

The price points are in the mass luxury space, between \$15 to \$30, and comparable to a Laroche Posay or Vichy in the drugstore channel.



The botanical line from Kamedis. George Chinsee

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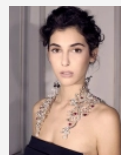
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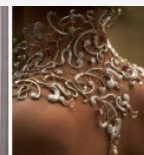
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