



GOOD PEOPLE

Danvers Devereux

Sustainability is at the heart of Danvers Devereux's home and business life centred at his 5-acre property in Matakana.

Words Carolyn Enting. Photography Andrew Coffey

Innovative thinking, a strong vision and a little bit of luck has seen Danvers Devereux, managing director and owner of natural body care line Matakana Botanicals, turn his 5-acre rural property in Matakana into a sustainable operation. Later this year he plans to open a café and store too, which will serve food made from locally sourced produce. When he purchased the property five years ago it was overgrown and littered with derelict farm vehicles. After a lot of hard work, he unearthed a bounty of heritage fruit trees and grape vines as well as a natural spring and working pump. Since then he's renovated the original farmhouse, planted bee-friendly plants, built three Custom Kit/Eco Span barns (each insulated with eco fleece) and a hen house and erected an outdoor shower and two glamping tents for guests, all powered by a solar system, fed by a Biolytix septic worm farm and seaweed irrigation system, and decorated with hanging wall gardens. The motto of the father of four – “tread lightly on the land today ... so our children can follow tomorrow”.

What local ingredients do you like to use in your products?

Our three hero ingredients, which we use across the board in just about all of our products, are the olive oil which we grow ourselves including some from the local olive cooperative, macadamia oil from Kaipara, and our wild harvested organic Manuka honey and oil comes from Great Barrier Island. The fragrances of our Matakana Botanicals new Coast and Country range are also inspired by the area. Cocoa and Vanilla is all about the markets and foodie fragrances. Lime and Grapefruit is a really nice zesty citrus – there's a lot of lime orchards in the area. Mandarin and Verbena – just across here at Point Wells is New Zealand's largest easy-peel mandarin orchard. And then there's Rose and Peony which is an ode to Whangateau red rose, which it's famous for and you'll see them down at the Saturday Matakana Market.

Also just launched is our new Provincial range consisting of Macadamia & Wild Fig along with Lime & Olive, being a reflection of the region.

Why do you choose natural plant extracts and local ingredients for your ranges Matakana Botanicals, Great Barrier Island Bee Co. and Gardeners Earth Botanicals?

I'm inspired by what's around me and creating iconic Kiwi-inspired ranges and brands that utilise local ingredients. I wanted them to be close to our origin; sourcing close to the property was an important factor. Apart from the benefits of natural ingredients being utilised we sort of live and breathe the area.

You can find Matakana Botanicals in many hotels and lodges now too...

Yes. It's a refillable eco-orientated amenity range for hotels. I've designed little racks for the product because we supply 5-litre packs that can be refilled so that they are not disposing of all the miniatures.

Lavender is a key ingredient for your best-selling sleep sniff boxes. Where do you source the lavender?

Over the years we have bought many lavender oils from other lavender farms >

With a lot of hard work Danvers Devereux has transformed the five acres into a bountiful and bee-friendly piece of land which houses his home and several Eco Span barns for his company Matakana Botanicals. It even provides for guests with a solar-powered outdoor shower and two glamping tents. Opposite page, from left, Danvers Devereux with a basket of some the products his company produces; one of the Eco Span barns on the property made from regenerating pine forest; Manuka oil from Great Barrier Island.



Bee-friendly plants have been planted extensively on the property to support the beehive populations who live there. Opposite page: Fallen apples from the heritage trees on the property are a favourite 'fetch game' alternative to tennis balls for loyal labrador, Jess, and are good for her teeth too: a personal note for The Body Shop founder Anita Roddich hangs in the staff room at Matakana Botanicals; Lime & Olive is one of the new fragrances from the new Provincial range; fragrant candles are part of the Matakana Botanicals range.



[in New Zealand]. We've started to grow our own grosso lavender which has a nice, greeny-woody note. It's not an ideal lavender growing area so we've used a bed-raising machine to make high rows and mixed pumice into the dirt. Our lavender oil is then utilised in our 'Sleep' sniff boxes which we proudly supply to Emirates First Class.

Can you tell us about what you call Matakana Botanicals "greenness".

Since the company started 27 years ago (founded at Les Florales by my mother Colyn Devereux-Kay) we've always been conscious of working in a responsible and sustainable way. It's simply right and it's doing good for the environment. The timber of our Eco Span barns in Matakana is pine from regenerating forests and painted with Resene Cool Colour technology which reflects the heat. The buildings have also been positioned in such a way to allow natural light to provide heating in winter and provide a large north-facing roof for solar panels which feeds power into a large lithium battery box which then provides power to all buildings. More than 90 per cent of bulbs used are either LED or energy

efficient bulbs and we've used Eco Fleece to insulate the house, café and offices. It's a wool-based fibre.

What about the greater garden?

We are a very bee-friendly company. Without them we would not be here! We've extensively planted bee-friendly flowering New Zealand native trees around the property including kowhai, pohutakawa and karo as well as lavender and manuka which is great for our bees and the distillery where we extract botanical oils. All our edible herb and veg gardens are irrigated from a natural spring on the property, which go via large tanks filled with nutrient-rich seaweed we have collected from local beaches. The results are amazing. All other water used on the property is from rain which falls on the roofs and then flows underground to our 3 x 30,000 litre tanks. These have been placed under trees in the shade to keep fresh and cool. The water is then treated with a UV and filter system.

We've also got our own worm waste system, Biolytix, which looks after all our waste water. It gradually gets broken down by tiger worms until you've got a grey water

mass. The tiger worms are basically converting it into a liquid nitrogen, which is great for the plants.

A note from The Body Shop founder Anita Roddich hangs in the Matakana Botanicals staffroom ...

I was very fortunate to sit next to her at a lunch many years ago where she was guest speaker and launching a new book. She wrote inside my copy "To Danvers ... Imagination is more important than knowledge". I then photocopied and have always hung it on a wall in the office and it's currently in our staff room. Her words have always inspired me as I was no academic growing up but always have had a very creative imagination to get me through! I often say to my young staff, 'You don't need to be the brightest... just have good ideas and act on them.' Anita's book about the history of The Body Shop was also most inspiring. Here small beginnings certainly reminded me of our own, with mum making fragrant potpourri under the house and evolving into body care with Les Florales. There were definite synergies of a great journey. **g**