

THE IRISH TIMES

SURYA Brasil

Naturally: no tug of war, no fried ends,
just silky smooth dyed hair

Henna gets a bad rep but the Surya Brasil brand is safe to use even on treated hair



Henna is suited for those who would like to go darker rather than lighter

I've seen hairdressers roll their eyes –floor-to-ceiling circles in their sockets – at the thought of using henna as a hair dye. Henna has a reputation, which is not unfounded, for being incompatible with commercial dyes and limited in terms of colour to 50 shades of orange.

Newer formulations using this semipermanent dye have made headway in terms of compatibility and colour, however, and while it doesn't provide the same transformative, long-lasting results commercial dye is capable of, that's not really the point. It's a natural dye for a natural look, and many use it as a conditioning treatment to add gloss and shine to tired hair.

"It's to enhance the colour you have . . . it coats the hair with a nice shine and brings life to highlights," says hairdresser Bill Galligan of Galligan College Hair and Beauty on Grafton Street in Dublin. He recommends at-home hair dyes by Surya Brasil, a Brazilian company specialising in vegan, natural and organic hair and body care. Its henna products provide colour and coverage of greys while actually improving the condition of the hair, he says.

"The lustre, the shine, the condition of the hair is just awesome. Everyone thinks the colours are just fantastic." He doesn't sell the dye in his salon – clients who prefer expert application over DIY bring store-bought boxes to him.

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Some 35 years ago, when natural alternatives were harder to track down, the eco-minded Galligan boiled herbs and plants in his apartment and brought homemade dyes into his salon. After using henna for 30 years, he discovered Surya Brasil and now uses nothing else. Its dyes do not contain PPD, resorcinol, peroxide or ammonia – some of the most common irritants found in commercial hair dye. Ammonia is often used to open the cuticle, or outer layer of the hair, to allow the colour to penetrate the hair's cortex where melanin, or pigment, is stored. According to Galligan, this literally “tears at the outer layer of the hair”, doing damage that's difficult to undo. Semipermanent henna, on the other hand, lodges under the scales of the cuticle, adding superficial colour.

Surya Brasil's henna powders and creams – available in nine and 15 shades respectively and sold in most health-food shops and select pharmacies – are the first Galligan has come across that are safe to use on chemically treated, colour-treated and highlighted hair. He says on average his clients come in for colour every six weeks. For first-timers hoping to cover greys, he recommends reapplying every three weeks for the first few applications.

I've been looking for a more natural alternative to the cocktail of chemicals I get brushed onto my hair two or three times a year. Henna is suited for those who would like to go darker rather than lighter (the light coloured dyes will enhance highlights, but if you're a brunette, don't expect to transform into a blonde).

I have dark, ash blonde hair (real) with light blonde highlights (fake), so I'm not the best candidate to test its dyeing power. But I tried a Surya Brasil cream at home and noticed a difference. It was difficult to discern any change to my natural roots, but my highlights became slightly brighter, cleaner, fresher looking. The conditioning effect was less discreet. After my typical colour, my hair feels dry and coarse and is difficult to detangle. After this, it was soft, glossy and easy to run a brush through – no tug of war, no fried ends, just silky smooth, healthy-looking hair.