

## calm conditions

MUCH MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY ORNAMENTAL, CHAMOMILE IS A NATURAL SOLUTION FOR A VARIETY OF AILMENTS, WRITES JULIETTE WINTER.

PHOTOGRAPHY CRAIG WALL STYLING GERALDINE MUÑOZ

WHEN PETER RABBIT came home with a tummy ache after gorging himself in Mr McGregor's garden, his mother gave him a cup of chamomile tea. What a clever bunny she was — thousands of years before Beatrix Potter penned stories of this mischievous rabbit, mothers around the globe had been reaching for this powerful petal to soothe common ailments.

Chamomile's therapeutic uses have been traced as far back as ancient Egypt, where it was prescribed as a cure for the 'ague' (acute fever). In the 17th century it was recommended by herbalist William Ram to 'comfort the brain' and today's specialists suggest that if you suffer from anxiety or insomnia, ditching coffee for a cup of this special flower tea is one of the best moves you could make. "Chamomile is not only a calming and gentle sedative, but it is of great value for anxiety," says Robyn Kirby, author of *Herbs For Healing* (ABC Books). "Chamomile is also anti-inflammatory and will offer protection in the gastrointestinal tract if there is inflammation there, too."

As well as settling an upset tummy and helping you nod off at night, chamomile is a fantastic skin soother. "In many European countries chamomile flowers are used extensively for both tea and compresses, due to its mild sedative and anti-inflammatory properties," says Sydney-based Sharon McGlinchey, creator of MV Organic Skincare. If you're using fresh chamomile, Sharon recommends

chopping the whole flower head (not just the white petals) and steeping it in hot water to create a chamomile infusion that you can drink, use in a bath or include in a compress.

However, the most potent healing form of chamomile is the flower's unusual bright blue essential oil. "The key soothing component of chamomile is azulene, a known anti-inflammatory and antihistamine," Sharon says. "Chamomile should be used more extensively as it suits all skin types and conditions, and may well help reduce the incidence of full-blown sensitivity if used on a regular basis."

One word of caution, however — the US National Institutes of Health recommend expectant mothers avoid chamomile because it can sometimes cause uterine contractions that can lead to miscarriage.

Chamomile is popular with garden enthusiasts, too. It's a fantastic lawn replacement (the most famous use is at Buckingham Palace, dating back to King George V). If you've ever had the pleasure of walking on a chamomile lawn, you'll appreciate where its original Greek name, *kamai melon* (ground apple) came from — the feather-soft leaves release a heady apple-like fragrance with every step.

Whether you're stepping on it, sipping it or using it as a natural skin remedy, Mrs Rabbit was clearly right about one thing: chamomile is a brilliant way to get your bounce back. \*

### PRETTY PETAL

SOOTHE YOUR SKIN WITH THE POTENT HEALING POWERS OF CHAMOMILE.

- Clarins Toning Lotion With Camomile (200ml, \$38) balances the skin and preps for moisturiser.
- Spritz Shu Uemura Depsea Water Chamomile Mist (150ml, \$46) to instantly cool, hydrate and calm your complexion.
- Treat your skin to the certified organic Planet Eve Facial Balancing Toner (100ml, \$45) with chamomile and calendula.
- Spiked with chamomile flowers Aum Anti Age Organics Cell Renew Facial Exfoliant (35g, \$24.95) should be mixed with cleanser to buff skin to perfection.
- A cocktail of calming essential oils, Darphin Chamomile Aromatic Care (15ml, \$98) soothes and nourishes even the most stressed complexion.
- Aveda Camomile Color Conditioner (250ml, \$59.95) gives a subtle golden sheen to light locks.
- Packed with soothing chamomile, vitamins and antioxidants, the Jojoba Company Hydrating Day Cream (85ml, \$54.95) leaves your complexion glowing.
- Perk up your peepers with potent Emergin C Vitamin C Eye Serum (15ml, \$95), which helps with puffiness and ageing.

For stockist details, see page 144.