

Orli, 3rd March 2017



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Home > Life . Beauty . Nature > Jess Bragdon from Koala Co

JESS BRAGDON FROM KOALA CO

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Koala Co is a family owned business; created by Jessica Bragdon and Paul Davidson. It was born out of their determination to "find safe, affordable, chemical-free cleaning products that smelled fabulous and worked."

The Koala Co range is grey water safe, free from artificial fragrances, dyes and toxic chemicals. Their range is about harnessing the complex antibacterial properties of 100% pure Australian essential oils to effectively cut through dirt and grime.

Jess is a true natural beauty advocate and a beautiful human being. Here's a snapshot of what, why and who inspires Jess.

1. What was your inspiration behind Koala co?

I wanted to be able to clean our house without holding my breath and worrying what was misting down onto my children's toothbrushes.

Orli, 3rd March 2017

I am influenced by the natural world and how it can provide us with not only beauty but with so much of what we need. In design, architecture, visual inspiration, nature can foster innovation, sustainability, and technology. Nature and our connection to it should be applied to our thought processes and how we think about the world. I realised that cleaning my house but filling it with chemicals was not actually cleaning it.



I am inspired by the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson and how he informed the future naturalists like Henry David Thoreau. Emerson believed that the divine suffuses nature and that reality can be understood by studying nature. Humans are part of nature and it is how we understand ourselves and our world. “Nature is not fixed but fluid; to a pure spirit, nature is everything.” I remember once in New York I was in the middle of graduate school exams and fatigued and anxious. I walked out to the dark Columbia Campus after a late study session. Looking up at the bright immaculate stars visible on a clear night in the city I thought how insignificant am I and I felt connection and relief.

2. What makes Koala co unique?

Our products are made with Australian essential oils and 100% biodegradable and eco-friendly plant-derived ingredients. Australia has an abundance of potent and distinctive flora not found anywhere else in the world, and in many cases the essential oils we source have been part of the Aboriginal pharmacopoeia for thousands of years. Koala Co uses high concentrations of potent essential oils, so that our cleaners not only work with the full force of nature but also leave homes smelling as aromatic as the Australian bushland. Essential oils shouldn't be confused with fragrances and perfumed oils, commonly used to mask chemical smells in standard cleaners and perfume. Essential oils are the healthy, eco-friendly and ethical alternative to 'fragrance' infused products. Synthetic fragrance contains toxic ingredients and this is not made aware to the public.

Living near Bondi Beach we've reason every day to appreciate the natural beauty of our planet. It's become important for us to find ways to help nurture it and preserve it for present and future generations, and we believe we all play a part in this. Each time you buy a Koala Co product, we'll donate to the charity One Percent for the Planet to assist in the ongoing protection of land, forests, rivers and oceans. All of our plastic bottles are made with 100% recyclable PET and our freight uses recycled packing material.

3. Has your American background influenced the creation of Koala co?

I like to think of my late grandmother as a latter-day version of Snow White, because animals and birds seemed to be drawn to her. She would take me and my twin sister on long hikes through the forests around her New England home, pointing out the flora and fauna along the way.

She passed on her passion for natural things to our mother, who likewise was an avid plant and garden enthusiast. Family outings invariably meant visits to historic gardens, plant nurseries and flower shows. Given this inspiring education in all things botanical, it's hardly surprising that, after we finished university, my sister and I started a floral business in Boston.

Our small business was my introduction to the exotic and wonderful world of Australian botanicals. Years later, after moving to Perth I was immersed in the delights of this country's diverse and fascinating flora.

For tens of thousands of years Australia's Aboriginal people have relied on potent and distinctive species such as Eucalyptus, Lemon Myrtle and Peppermint. With their natural antiseptic and astringent qualities, these native plants were (and still are) harvested for food and medicinal needs.

At Koala Co we're proud to be using Australia's native flora in a green, renewable and sustainable way. The essential oils we source from native Australian species for our products are free of any chemical components, and are widely researched for their anti-bacterial and cleansing properties.



4. What's your secret to juggling a young family and a business?

Motherhood is such a transformation the challenges and considerations of becoming a parent. Being a parent is truly the most life changing event anyone can do and there is no way to describe or understand it until you are in it. I always thought having a career and children would be easy until it was me. I wish I could go back in time and be more sympathetic to the women I worked with trying to juggle kids and corporate.

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Scandinavian countries just seem to get this balance so much better than Australia and America. I hope that my boys will have a better support system if they become parents than what is currently offered to families especially women. Having studied psychology I tend to have piles of parenting books next to my bed which I am always too exhausted to finish.

My basic philosophy with parenting is show them that they are loved and everything will be alright. As my father said to me children like life are never just smooth sailing there are always challenges ahead but you get through them. My boys are still quite young and I know it won't get easier but it's just so worth it. Even when I am setting boundaries and feeling completely overwhelmed and incompetent I tell them I love them. Also on a positive note being so busy has made me less of a helicopter parent.

5. What's your philosophy on beauty and do you have any favourite beauty products?

As I've gotten older my beauty philosophy is less is more however I can't part with black eyeliner I even wear it to work out. I avoid synthetic perfume and instead use essential oils my favourite is Orli's Eau Well organic wellness fragrances with magnesium. I use all of them but especially the Verve for its minty botanical scent which is not too sweet or floral. I keep it in my bag for a spritz when I want to feel calmer and clear. I also love the fair-trade skin care line Mokosh the body butter and rich face cream are heavenly with no nasty additives or perfumes.



Koala Co's beautifully scented, hard working range includes the mandarin and lemon myrtle dish soap, eucalyptus multi purpose bathroom spray, peppermint glass cleaner and the mandarin and lemon myrtle multi purpose kitchen spray.

Plus....the peppermint glass cleaner is also an effective pest deterrent. I spray and leave mine on bathroom surfaces, drawers and cupboards. Keeps those pesky cockroaches at bay.

Shop Koala Co's affordable, non-toxic, beautifully scented range **here**.