

Field of dreams

CAN LAVENDER CHASE AWAY THE BLUES?

Stress is on the up. Nearly half the adult population of developed countries claims to suffer. It's at the root of many diseases, gets in the way of a good night's sleep and can cause premature ageing of the skin. Lavender can't get to the root of the causes of stress, but its oil is proven to help calm nerves and uplift spirits.

BY LUCY HOLLOWAY

Lavender is a way of life for Jod Mitchell from **Mitchell and Peach** (mitchellandpeach.com), one of the few grower/producer beauty companies in the UK. In 2004 he and his father planted their first lavender bushes on the family farm in Kent. The quality of oil produced provided the inspiration for the Mitchell and Peach brand.

The Mitchell bit, well that's obvious. Peach from peachy, a word that Jod uses to describe the intense, punchy fragrance of the herb. He is the speaker at a lunch event at Coworth Park (www.dorchestercollection.com/en/ascot/coworth-park) the week after he has gathered the crop at the 60 acre farm. "Lavender is sharper than its reputation suggests and can whack you out during harvest."

All Mitchell and Peach products are fragranced with a blend that has English lavender at its heart, formulated to evoke summer evenings in the English countryside. The fragrance itself is captured in **Flora No. 1 Fine Edition Eau de Parfum** (£75 for 50ml) and highlights from the range include a **Bath Oil** (£39 for 100ml) and **Luxury Hand Cream** (£17 for 60ml). When I do blind tests of hand creams for friends (sad perhaps, but true) this is often the winner.

The newest addition to the family is the **Fine Radiance Face Oil** (£30 for 20ml). Made with cobnuts from the farm, it feels powdery rather than greasy on the skin and is antioxidant-rich. An effective night time booster for tired, stressed skin.



Night time is also the right time for **Cell Revitalise Night Moisturiser** (£42 for 60ml) from British brand **Aurelia Probiotic Skincare** (aureliaskincare.com). A probiotic and peptide rich cream that's fused with plant and flower essences including lavender. It boosts skin's own production of hyaluronic acid, works on the visible signs of ageing and smells utterly gorgeous. Both Mitchell and Peach and Aurelia products are also available from myshowcase.com.

Pure lavender oil is renowned for its antiseptic and soothing properties, useful for treating cuts, bites, spots, sunburn and for relieving tension headaches. Julia Lawless, author of

'The Encyclopaedia of Essential Oils' is also the founder of **Aqua Oleum** (aqua-oleum.co.uk). Her **Organic Lavender Essential Oil** (£6.50 for 10ml) is a quality product at a sensible price. Aqua Oleum also produce **Lavender Water** (£3.75 for 100ml), a toner and spritz which combines pure essential oil and spring water.

As you'd expect from a brand built around making beauty more natural and less synthetic, **Neal's Yard** (nealsyardremedies.com) has got lavender covered. Their **Lavender Essential Oil** (also £6.50 for 10ml) is another corker, and their **Bath Salts** (£15.50 for 500g) are particularly gorgeous, but they also take lavender into areas where other brands don't tread. Try **Nourishing Lavender Shampoo** (£11.50 for 200ml), **Lavender & Aloe Vera deodorant** (£8 for 100ml) and **Lavender and Tea Tree Body Powder** (£5.50 for 75g).

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Inspired by the big smoke, but available at Fenwick's in Windsor, **Soapsmith** (soapsmith.com) is a handmade range of soaps that reflects the character and heritage of iconic London areas. **Lavender Hill** (£6 for 150g) takes its name and inspiration from the days when SW11 was filled with lavender rather than toddlers. The Soapsmith lavender family also includes a **Body Butter Melt** (£10 for 100ml), **Bath Soak** (£12 for 350ml), **Body Wash** and **Body Lotion** (both £12 for 250ml).



Back to the Great British Countryside, where **Tisserands Aromatherapy** (tisserands.com) have brought their aroma know-how to a range of products that evoke the fragrance of National Trust gardens (nationaltrust.org.uk). **Lavender Walk** was inspired by the grounds of Belton House in Lincolnshire and Lytes Cary Manor in Somerset. Lavender oil is blended with coconut and chamomile oil and is available as a **Perfume Roller Ball** (£7 for a 10ml) and a **Bath Oil** (£11.50 for 100ml) from National Trust shops including those at Cliveden and Hushenden.

Lavender facial cleansers are few and far between, but there's no shortage of soaps. **Dr. Bronner's Magic 18-in-1 Lavender Pure Castile Soap** (£5.49 for 237ml, drbronner.co.uk) can wash anything: hands, smalls, you name it



One of my favourite lavender bath products is **Dr. Hauschka Moor Lavender Calming Bath Essence** (£16 for 100ml, drhauschka.com), which combines an intense and soothing fragrance with almond and jojoba oils to prevent drying.

If you're feeling grotty, the medicinal properties of lavender are given extra zing in **Support Lavender & Peppermint Bath & Shower Oil** (£40 for 55ml) from **Aromatherapy Associates** (aromatherapyassociates.com).

For bath time fun, try the **Twilight Bath Bomb** (£3.25 each) from **LUSH** (lush.co.uk and their store in the Eden Centre, High Wycombe) which changes colour as it fizzes around the tub.

For a relaxing shower that unlocks the energy of lavender my favourite is **Jurlique's Lavender Shower Gel** (£16 for 300ml, jurlique.co.uk), a soothing and refreshing blend for all skin types.

After bathing, spritz yourself with **Kerstin Florian's Lavender Body Spray** (£29.50 for 100ml, kerstinflorian.co.uk), where lavender and aloe extract are blended with jojoba oil and vitamin E to leave skin soft and glowing. Available from The Spa at Coworth Park.



There's more to **Aveda** (aveda.co.uk) than the much-loved shampoos and conditioners.

The latest addition to their **Stress-Fix™** bodycare collection, available from the Windsor store, is a **Body Crème** (£36 for 200ml). It promises 24h moisturisation and a stress-relieving aroma powered by lavender, clary sage and lavandin.