

# Leisure &



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While Wild Earth goods are produced in Kathmandu, they are sold all over Nepal, Europe, North America and Australia. A greater proportion of produces is exported than sold locally. To date, substantial quantities of the handcrafted products made by Nepali handicraft workers have been exported to the US, Canada, France, Norway, Germany, Japan, Australia and Singapore. Wild Earth products represent the traditions of the Himalaya and South Asia,

including the remarkable diversity of non-timber forest products found throughout the region. Another plus point for Wild Earth products are that the produce are 100% cruelty-free - they are neither tested on animals nor have animal parts and animal fat been used in their making.

Established by American national Carroll Dunham with the help of Babita Lama and Laikhu Lama of Women Welfare Service Nepal, Wild Earth came into existence to help link local products to lucrative foreign markets. Carroll opened the company as a way to generate income for the impoverished workers of the

## WILD EARTH

### Offering Ayurvedic products par excellence

**H**erbal products are not only totally natural but also highly beneficial for one's skin and body. Nepal's rich ethnic and geographic diversity are a boon because each ethnic group has different herbal remedies and formulas to offer. Potent herbal concoctions with their health-giving properties have cured people for generations and the techniques have been perfected over the generations.

Nepal abounds in various rare herbs and shrubs. Yet we are dependent on foreign companies to supply us with everything from soaps and medicines to perfumes and gifts.

But native Ayurvedic companies are increasingly bucking this trend. One such company involved in the herbal trade is Wild Earth.

For eight years, Wild Earth, based in Bhat Bhateni of Kathmandu has been producing 200 different herb-derived blode-

Himalayan herb traders in Humla. At present, the organization works with a variety of non-profit groups and women's and community enterprises to develop herbal products and market them to a growing international clientele. The benefits accruing from this are two-fold. Nepali products gain acceptance in the world commodity market and the emancipation of rural workers is effectively undertaken by involving them in productive activities.

# Life Style

The products made by Wild Earth consist of 30 varieties of herbal soaps, 15 massage oils, 12 herbal pillows, 15 pure essential oil blends, creams, amulets, soothing eye pillows, bead bracelets, smudge sticks, candles, moth repellent sachets, incenses and incense holders.

According to the company's director of marketing Nina Henning who oversees the day-to-day operations, all of their products are intended for cosmetic body care rather than for medicinal purposes. "Handcrafted products like the Nak (femaleYak) Milk soap, which contain a great deal of fat, works as a moisturizing soap. Other soaps which contain a mixture of Tibetan salt and olive oil work together in removing dead skin while simultaneously moisturizing it," says Henning.

Aromatic pillows with earthly themes like Energy, Passion, Baby, Tranquility, Dream and Hangover contain special blends of traditional herbs and are available with a matching amulet. The herbs in

the pillows and amulet are genuine and powerful, straight from the world's most prolific high Himalayan herb gardens. These pillows can be used in one's computer desk to support the wrist or as an air-freshener. Nina further adds that the only animal properties that are found in any of their products are milk and beeswax.

Sobha, Reena and Jays are three ladies who have been working for Wild Earth. Pressing, cutting and setting the soap ingredients in an aromatic backroom, they express their joy at being able to do work that pays well and helps to improve the image of native produce abroad. "The work is well-paying and this has made us financially independent," they say in unison when asked about the benefits of working for Wild Earth.

Marketing director Henning, however, is not happy about the state of the market for their products in Nepal. "While western consumers have realized that natural products are optimum for good health, the same is not true of Nepalis. Only a few out-



lets such as Shangrila Hotel, Hyatt Regency, Tiger Mountain, Pilgrims Book House, Café Mitra, Folk Nepal and the Patan Museum Shop stock our produce and the customers are predominantly expatriates."

Henning also informs that while the government does not tax or create unnecessary hassles in the export of Wild Earth products, they do however create an occasional hurdle by demanding certificates of authenticity or prying into packed material. "The main obstacles for smooth business are the exorbitant raw material costs and the lack of any incentives from the government for those involved in this trade," says Henning.

Finally, while the legions of those who use herbal products secure in the belief that these products are good, there is no dearth of skeptics too. In a recent BBC New Scientific Frontiers documentary titled 'alternative medicine', questions were raised about the effectiveness of such products, with eminent scientists crediting the effectiveness more to placebo effect than true utility.

Whatever the truth, it is up to the consumers to make the final decision - to use or not to use herbal products!

■ BY SAURAV JUNG THAPA