

Time Out

New York

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GARDEN VARIETIES
COOL WAYS TO DRESS UP
YOUR OUTDOOR SPACE

**SUMMER
BOOZING
SPECIAL!**

THE DYE and let live

Avoid the harmful effects of chemical-based hair coloring in the capable care of these salons By **Clare Lambe**

Health-conscious New Yorkers eat organic foods, avoid unnatural additives and choose environmentally friendly goods whenever they can. Yet when it comes to finding the perfect shade of baby blond or Renaissance red, it seems we're more than willing to trade green for glam. On some people, the process of dyeing hair can cause rashes, chemical burns, lead and mercury poisoning, and lead to respiratory illness. Even if you skirt all of that, you could still develop allergies after long-term use. Armed with this knowledge, we found four professional colorists offering natural alternatives for harassed heads.

RIAH Owner Anne Minahan believes that coloring hair is always a trade-off, because no permanent dye is completely organic. Even the cleanest plant-based formulas contain minute quantities of the chemical p-phenylenediamine (PPD), or use small amounts of peroxide or

bleach to lighten hair. After 20 years as a color specialist, Minahan got tired of inhaling ammonia from hair colorant. "The fumes can cause bronchitis," she says. So she switched to the least harmful coloring methods available, employing just two systems, both of which are ammonia-free, at her pint-sized Noho salon, Riah. For everything from color corrections to blonding, darkening and covering gray, she uses Phyto's Kydra range, which packs powerful siegesbeckia, a medicinal herb that has antihistamine-like qualities to soothe irritated scalps. Gentler yet is Color by Robert Craig. Its perfume- and peroxide-free formula contains only tiny amounts of PPD. It won't lighten hair, but it will impart permanent shades ranging from dark blond to black. By appointment, Minahan even custom-blends herbal tonics and conditioning treatments for sensitive-skinned clients and casualties of overprocessing. 209 Mott St between Prince and Spring Sts (212-925-4087).

Chill Out

GENTLE HAIR COLOR In her flora-scented storefront salon, Gentle Hair Color, Beth Gurin doesn't cut, style or even blow-dry hair; she simply colors it with the most natural products she can find. The one-woman shop carries five skin- and hair-friendly product ranges, including the demipermanent Schwarzkopf Igora 100% Botanic system. Gurin imports Igora from Brussels because it contains no artificial dyes, peroxide or ammonia; it stains the hair with natural pigment derived from the likes of indigo, logwood and nutgalls from the white oak tree. But she doesn't carry products heavy in henna and chamomile. According to Gurin, henna's reddish color range is limited, chamomile is too subtle and they both dry out the hair too much. Satisfying an innate creative streak, she uses her full palette of gels, creams and powders to effect anything from fun shades of aubergine to luminous strawberry blond. "Using herbal color is a perfect mix of chemistry and artistry for me," she says. "It just feels natural." 200 W 80th St between Broadway and Amsterdam Ave (212-496-7746). By appointment only.

JOHN MASTERS

If you're planning to switch from raven black to honey blond, don't go to John Masters in Soho—he'll turn you away. The cocktail of chemical agents required to make that kind of spectrum leap are strictly banned at the clean-air salon, as are perms, straightening agents, ammonia and hairspray. "People worry about smoking," Masters says with a sigh. "But they'll happily make a toxic wasteland of their hair." Masters started using vegetal dyes in 1994 and, after extensive research, reckons that Europe has the best available. "I thoroughly investigate all of the products," he says. "And only use those that actually work." He imports lines such as Color Herbe, an ammonia-free range from Italy, but also uses U.S.-made Farouk bleach, which is clay-based

and less likely to cause the chemical burns associated with going platinum. Besides salon processes, Masters has a self-titled organic hair care line. It combines zinc, sage, honey and hibiscus with an array of steam-distilled essential oils, which he uses to create glossy, conditioned results. 77 Sullivan St between Broome and Spring Sts (212-343-9590).

COCOON

On a 1999 trip to his native Ecuador, hairstylist-cum-ecological educator Fabian Lliguin learned about the healing and moisturizing benefits of dragon tree sap and rahua nut oil, traditionally used by the indigenous Quechuan Indians for its wound-healing and antiseptic properties. Upon returning to New York, he experimented with the natural salves and found he could mix them with hair color to create less caustic dyes in fashionable hues. Today, Lliguin uses L'anza Belavance color at his tiny salon, Cocoon, because the low PPD and sulphur content make it less of an irritant and, when mixed with his serums, gentle enough even for clients with psoriasis and eczema (conditions that often rule out hair dye for sufferers). Several times a year, Lliguin travels deep into Ecuador's Amazon rainforest to harvest the sap and oil, and to lecture on their use as a skin and hair tonic to the Quechuan, to whom he also donates 50 percent of the proceeds from his salon treatments. 318 E 70th St between First and Second Aves (212-879-5630).

SKY HIGH
Things are looking up for Happy Bobby Cannata pictured at Ava Lounge

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