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SECTION D

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Salon & Style

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Bottled bouquets

Flower essences intended to promote wellness

By DAVE MASON
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Crows are circling a hawk and trying to chase it away in the sky far above a forested Santa Barbara hill. Below them, Glorianna Buynak is unveiling flowers as her two donkeys, Oakilla and its offspring Sundance, stroll by the large, organic garden — a kaleidoscope in a land of green.

"They eat the weeds," she said, surrounded by white roses, calendula, bougainvillea, geraniums and many other flowers in bloom at her home.

Ms. Buynak, 66, grows the blossoms, then places them in a bowl of spring water under the sun. They infuse the water with their "vibrations" or "energetic signature." After a few hours, the flowers are removed.

Owner of Glory B Flower Essences, Ms. Buynak said the floral energy is retained in the water, which becomes a flower essence. (Organic alcohol, organic vinegar or organic oil is added as a preservative.) She mixes various flower essences into bottles.

Flower essences — diluted extracts — are enough to make you feel better physically, mentally and spiritually, say practitioners who create them.

A variety of flowers can be used in essences and the solutions are used by themselves or blended with other essences to, they say, achieve specific results, such as

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THOMAS KELSEY/NEWS-PRESS

Glorianna Buynak, owner of Glory B Flower Essences, checks out the flowers budding on her pomegranate bush in her Santa Barbara garden. She uses many species in her flower essences — diluted extracts — to help people with emotional problems.

Body, mind and soul connection

ESSENCE

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be more alert or facilitate healing. A form of homeopathic or holistic medicine, flower essences took root in the 1930s with Dr. Edward Bach. Dr. Bach, who practiced at the Royal London Homeopathic Hospital and founded the Bach Centre in Brighton-I-sum-Sotwell, a village in England, developed the floral remedies to correct imbalances in the body and mind. He believed that diseases come about as a result of imbalances or negativity in the soul.

Star Siparetti, 56, owner of Star Essence in Santa Barbara, said the solutions can make you feel healthier and younger and even more beautiful. She creates blends

"I think they bring a sparkle to her smile," said Ms. Siparetti, who started her flower essence business in 1994, said the "vibrations" from flower

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but flower essences are more vibrational," she said. "A lot of

Flower essences don't feature vitamins, minerals or nutrients, Ms. Siparetti said. And there's no scent that of the organic vinegar, organic oil or organic alcohol used as preservatives.

"I can't tell you scientifically how it works," Ms. Siparetti said, but added, "You can't separate the body and the mind and the spirit."

She said most of her customers have told her the products make a difference.

But medical experts have reported no proven benefit from flower essences other than a possible placebo effect.

"I don't think it's a psychological thing," Ms. Buynak countered, explaining that people feel the results without having to analyze them.

It's not necessary to believe in them for them to work, Ms. Siparetti added. "I've had skeptics come back after being blown away."

Ms. Stevens said she too encounters skeptics, "but people have been using this medicine for a long time."

Local practitioners say they don't use flower essences as a substitute for conventional medicine but in conjunction with it.

While Ms. Siparetti doesn't think

THOMAS KELSEY/NEWS-PRESS

Donkeys eat the weeds in Glorianna Buynak's organic garden. Flowers must be free of toxins or preservatives before diluted extracts are made, she said.

The reporter told me that he really believed I did do things ORGANICALLY when he saw the donkeys walk by the garden!