

LARGEST WEEKLY CIRCULATION IN THE HAMPTONS PLUS SPECIAL MANHATTAN DELIVERY

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# HEALTH & BEAUTY

## Skin deep with Samantha Altea

### Bathing Bliss

I've got a one-track mind. It's a heart stopping 6 degrees outside, not counting wind chill, and as I write this week's column, all I can think about is jumping into a steaming hot, soothing bath. If, like me, you're hibernating these days and can't bear to brave the elements, then get with the program. It's time to embrace the bone-chilling cold. No, I haven't lost my mind. For starters, take the phone off the hook, lock all the doors and make a date to stay home. I'm giving you permission to pamper yourself in the great indoors. Instead of wrapping up for the cold, take it all off. What could be cozier than drawing a luxurious bath when it's freezing outside? Here are my suggestions for the most perfect bathtime treat. But get ready, this isn't the watered down version - I've got you covered for bed, bath and beyond in style.

The first thing to consider is dressing your bath and bathroom. Put a soft terry towel pillow in the place where your head will be. It isn't comfortable or relaxing to lay your head against a hard enamel tub. Try Restoration Hardware for a terry towel bath pillow. At \$15, it's worth it. Make sure you have a soft, toe-tantalizing mat laid beside the bath so that entering and exiting the sanctuary of your tub is as enjoyable as the bathing experience itself. Portico Home has a sumptuous array of bath mats starting at \$28.

Bathing perfection is about the ambience created, so turn the lights down low and get plenty of candles. Pick only one candle that has a fragrance. Satisfying every sense during the perfect bath is important and begins with smell, but don't overdo it. Keep the other candles scentless...remember you're in a somewhat confined space. Tocca candles are divine and come in many scents. Try Tocca's "Tara" (\$32), with infusions of white ginger and lily. Now select some wonderful calming music to play in the background. Something like *Enya* springs to mind, or perhaps a classical piece for a touch of drama and sophistication, or some jazz to

mellow out. Once you've set the scene for your bath, make sure you have sumptuous towels, robes and slippers close at hand to wrap yourself in once you're ready to get out. It's no fun relaxing in the bath and then scrambling for towels in the cold when you're done. Lavish towels can be found both at Portico Home, or Restoration Hardware. Go for a



bath sheet, to really engulf yourself in a mass of wonderful luxurious fabric.

Finding the perfect robe is also a must. There's nothing better than throwing a soft robe on clean, smooth, moisturized skin. Pick up a pair of spa slippers while you're at it, so that you'll feel cozy from head to toe. Portico and Restoration have both.

The last preparation before drawing water? What do you want to do in the bath? Some people just want to chill out, listen to music and relax. But others like to read. Choose a book that's easy to read, one that you can pick up and put down easily. Nothing too heavy, in either weight, or content. If

turning the pages of a book seems too much like hard work, get an audio book.

Now you're ready to turn the faucet. Pour hot water in the beginning - you can always add cold, but it's catastrophic if you run out of hot. For quintessential sophistication and luxury in bathing accompaniment you'll have to cross the Atlantic. But it's so worth the trip. Don't even think about setting foot in warm water without whispering the words Lafco and Santa Maria Novella, the incredibly luxurious soaps, bath oils and body products that jetsetters and movie stars can't stop talking about. Santa Maria Novella gives us the ancient nectar of Florence, Italy, and it's less fattening than the pizza. It's an exquisite product from a 17th century pharmacy that the likes of Catherine Zeta-Jones and Michael Douglas make special trips to get their hands - and bodies - on. The good news is that it's just been imported to NYC, LA and, where else, the Hamptons. Pick it up at In Home in Sag Harbor, or C&W Mercantile, in East Hampton. The soaps are to die for and the bath oils...well, just try them. The packaging is classic chic and the fragrances are heavenly. They also make wonderful après bath milks and moisturizing creams. Don't forget to take care of your skin after you dry off. Another brand with the A-list seal of approval is Jo Malone, export of London, England. Try the Nutmeg and Ginger bath oil. It was Jo's first product.

Okay, so you've spent hours immersed in bathing blissfulness, you're moisturized and dry, ready to slip on a luxurious robe and slide into bed. The very ultimate in post-bathing perfection is to curl up in magnificent opulent bed sheets. For unmeasured luxury, try Italian-made Egyptian cotton Pratesi linens. You'll never want to leave the house again - but you might have to take out a second mortgage to get a set. You won't exactly be slumming it in gorgeous Frette sheets, either.

There's only one problem when you perfect the definitive bath experience - you'll end up looking like a prune and may not venture out until spring.

## Rock Cottage (continued from previous page)

return to the dominant purple color.

Seeds can be sown directly in the garden in fall to establish seedlings that over winter or during winter produce plants that bloom later, or will be biennial. Planting seeds in the January greenhouse produces plants to transplant to the garden mid-April. Planting outside in January produces plants that are likely to be biennial.

*Digitalis* requires light to germinate so seeds

should not be covered when planting. Sprinkle seeds at the back of the border, or if sowing seeds in flats, press the seeds lightly into a soil mix. (We use compartmentalized flats or ice cube trays to start seeds.) Use a sterile potting mix to avoid fungus that causes young plants to dampen off. (Mixing a copper fungicide in water that is used also prevents fungus.) Keep soil moist.

For greenhouse plants, transplant seedlings to

larger pots when the plants are about an inch tall. Transfer seedlings to their final location in borders in mid-April. Remember that clumps of flowers provide a more spectacular display than single plants that are spread out.

We think Foxglove is one of the easiest and more rewarding garden plants for a late spring show. Starting seeds now provides color the first year and also satisfies the urge to "get going" with spring.

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