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What is Henna?

Henna (*Lawsonia inermis*, also known as hina, mehndi, henna tree, mignonette tree, Egyptian privet) is a flowering plant that grows 12-15 feet high and comes from the sole species of the *Lawsonia* genus. The English name "henna" comes from the Arabic term الحناء (*al-ḥinnā*). The name henna also refers to the dye prepared from the henna plant and the art of temporary tattooing from those dyes. Henna has been used for centuries to dye skin, hair, and fingernails, as well as fabrics including silk, wool, and leather.

The henna plant contains lawsone which is a reddish-orange dye that binds to the keratin (a protein) in our skin and safely stains the skin. The stain can be from pale orange to deep burgundy depending on the quality of the henna and how well one's skin takes it.





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Origin of Henna:

The art of henna (called mehndi or mehendi in Hindi & Urdu languages) has been practiced for over 5000 years in IRAN, Pakistan, India, Africa and the Middle East.

Some documentation dates Henna to over 9000 years old.

Because henna has natural cooling properties, people of the desert, for centuries, have been using henna to help control their body temperature. They would make a paste from the crushed dried leaves of the henna plant and soak their palms and soles of the feet in it to get a cooling affect. The cooling sensation was felt throughout the body for as long as the henna stain remained on their skin. Initially, as the stain faded away, it left patterns on the skin's surface which led to ideas of making designs for decorative purposes. In the ancient Egyptian times even mummies wore henna designs and it is documented that Cleopatra herself used henna for decorative purposes





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Henna in the West:

Today people all over the world have adopted the ancient tradition of embellishing their bodies with the beautiful natural artwork created from the henna plant. In the 90's it became a very popular form of temporary bodily decoration in the USA, and has become a growing trend ever since. Celebrities like Madonna, Gwen Stefani, Yasmine Bleeth, Liv Tyler, and Xena, among others, have proudly adorned their bodies with henna and showed them off in public, movies, videos, etc. People throughout the West have adopted this Eastern tradition in their lives by having their hands and feet painted for weddings, bellies painted during pregnancy, heads patterned with henna while going through chemotherapy, scars camouflaged to make them unnoticeable, and so on. Henna has also become a worldwide trend as a temporary tattoo since it can be made to resemble a real tattoo but it comes without the pain or long term commitment.





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Henna for the Hair:

Henna is a natural permanent dye that is widely used throughout the world for its color and amazing benefits to the hair. Henna hair coloring dates back thousands of years and has been used by both men and women to dye their hair, beards, mustaches and even the hair of animals. It is a fast growing trend in the natural hair industry because it is a healthy alternative to the toxic chemical dyes found in the market. Henna does the opposite for the scalp and hair that synthetic dyes do. It actually makes the hair stronger, shinier, healthier and rejuvenates dry, dull and damaged hair. The more it is applied the better it is for the hair. Synthetic dyes, on the other hand, may not only damage the hair but also ones health. Another fun fact about henna is that those who are sensitive to synthetic hair dyes can often benefit from henna hair dye.



Benefits of Henna for the Hair:

- It colors the hair an orange to rich red color and mixed with other herbs it can give you many other color variations from light red blonde to black.
- It strengthens the hair and helps prevent breakage and split ends
- It helps prevent hair fall and thinning of the hair
- It makes the hair shiny and lustrous
- It conditions the hair
- It's anti-fungal and anti-parasitic properties keep the lice out and help prevent fungal diseases in the scalp
- It rejuvenates dry, dull and damaged hair by closing and smoothing the cuticle
- It is often used by people with sensitive skin and cancer patients because of its gentle properties.
- It often softens the hair. The hair might feel straw-like if used over bleached hair because the extra coating of the henna can make the hair stiffer after bleaching. The grow-out, however, will feel very soft.