



POWDER ROOM

*You don't need to work on the land for hands to show the strains of daily chores writes **Natasha Hughes**.*

She'd built a pole house on the side of a mountain, broken horses and by 37 had had three children, the first at 19 while on the road around Australia in a 1956 Bedford bus. She had a gold-flecked beauty and dreamy green eyes, and a quiet way of speaking that made you think what she was saying was insightful or prophetic. But what impressed the men of the mountain most of all — and, believe me, the mountain men just adored her — were her hands. "Look at these," they'd say to each other and to guests to those parts. "She's beautiful but look at her hands. Real worker's hands." The cuts and calluses were as alluring as any hint of satin cleavage or a doe-eyed glance.



Of course, few of us have the opportunity or inclination to develop the hands of a 50-year-old labourer — nor would those around us be impressed by our callouses. Hands "age" quickly and can age us: we all use them, if not for splitting wood, for washing up and hanging out the clothes and myriad other activities involving water, sun and friction.

Plastic surgeons report that hand therapies are a growth area. "We do exactly for the hands what we do for the face," says plastic surgeon Dr Mark Edinburg, which includes using lightening creams and laser treatments and fillers. "We can use own-fat fillers so the tendons don't stick out," he says. "Hands are a dead giveaway if you don't look after them."

Looking after them is not difficult but can be difficult to sustain. Full marks for wearing gloves for housework and applying sunscreen daily. "As soon as my hands get near water I put on hand cream," says Sally Williams of Float Day Spa in South Yarra. "Really, I do." My hand cream use plummeted overnight when a diamond ring was placed on my finger (can't take the sparkle off marriage) but it's been revived by Barielle, a long-established US hand care brand that has solutions to concerns I hadn't even pinpointed (Clearly Noticeable Nail Thickener, \$24, Nail Strengthener Cream, \$26, and 60-Second Manicure exfoliant, \$45). I've been known to remove my ring for the fragrance alone of Clarins Hand and Nail Treatment Cream (\$38) and for the richness of Aveda's Hand Relief (\$45). The mountain men would put all this down to pathetic feminine vanity but naturally my husband's not one of them.

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