

GREEN GODDESS 'I'M SURE YOU'RE DISGRUNTLED BY THE ARRAY OF ORANGE PLASTIC TAT ON SALE'

LOUISA PEARSON

LIFESTYLE

WHIZZ, bang, ooooh. Interpret that how you like, but I'm aiming to draw your attention to Guy Fawkes Night. Firstly, what did you get up to last night? Were you at a Halloween party? Or will your children be going out guising tomorrow night? I'm having nothing to do with it, short of buying some monkey nuts on the off-chance that someone turns up at the door. That is not an open invitation to Jehovah's Witnesses or door-to-door salespeople, by the way. Genuine guisers only.

Anyway, I'm sure you're as disgruntled as I am by the array of orange plastic tat on sale to 'celebrate' Halloween. The green message is to turn your back on these cheap accessories (which come with a one-way ticket to landfill) and use your imagination when it comes to making costumes and decorations. If in doubt, a white sheet with eyeholes will suffice. And when you've carved your pumpkin, make sure you toast the seeds and roast the flesh to make soup, pie or risotto. Roasting flesh sounds gruesome, doesn't it? Suitably Halloweenish. Dooking for apples and something I vaguely remember involving a treacle scone on a bit of string should hopefully be enough to send younglings into a state of high excitement without harming the planet.

Onwards to bonfire night. Are you aware of the debate over whether fireworks should be banned? What tosh. Am I the only one who relies on those explosions of colour to lift my spirits as winter's bleak moods start to take hold? There are good reasons why some environmentalists hate fireworks. Those fizzing colours and explosive sounds are created by a jolly cocktail of chemicals, none of which has health benefits when inhaled. However, according to Environment Protection UK, pollutants from fireworks do not pose a risk to soil or water, so I say let the Catherine wheel turn.

Is there such a thing as eco-friendly fireworks? Not really. There is a less wasteful system called Blackboxx, but it's for serious pyrotechnics rather than back-garden dabblers. I'd never dream of buying fireworks, having been terrified by that 1970s advert of a child gripping a sparkler the wrong way round. It had a similar impact as the ad about climbing into an electricity substation to retrieve a Frisbee. This is a tangent but maybe these ads should be brought back. They traumatised a generation but were highly effective.

Anyway, a whopping amount of the UK's dioxin emissions are produced on Guy Fawkes Night - an estimated five to 14 percent - but this is largely due to bonfires rather than the fireworks. Guidance on having a more eco-friendly bonfire includes attending a public event rather than creating your own personal pyre. And untreated wood and dry garden materials get the thumbs up for giving off less smoke, while plastics, tyres, tins of paint and other stuff that would essentially make your bonfire a toxic inferno are not recommended. Building the fire a long time in advance is also a no-no, lest an unsuspecting hedgehog chooses it as a hibernation destination.

We're back to Halloween again, what with the potential for roasted hedgehog flesh. And on that note, I'll sign off. This pumpkin won't carve itself. ■

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Fit for the future

IN TEN years' time what will you be doing? How will you be feeling? And what will be important to you? Most of us haven't a clue what the future holds, but Dr Ian Yeoman makes it his business to know. Or at least to make an educated guess. A Scot now working at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, he is the world's only futurologist specialising in travel and tourism.

Commissioned by Edinburgh's One Spa to mark its tenth anniversary, he has looked into his crystal ball to discover what kind of shape the spa industry will be in. And his vision makes fascinatingly sci-fiesque reading.

Faced with an increasingly stressed out, ageing population (by 2030 one in five people in developed countries will live to 100), and one that is also faced with a growing obesity problem (three out of four of us will be overweight by 2020), he predicts that healthcare and tourism will be the world's two largest industries by 2022. "In an era of increasing longevity, where health, well-being and appearance reign, spa holidays will feature strongly," he says.

So how does a business like One Spa, the award-winning Scottish spa founded in 2001 at a cost of £10 million and widely considered the finest urban spa in Europe, prepare for the future? And what could it look like come 2012? Picture, if you will, non-surgical treatments that not only prevent ageing but actually reverse the process. "This may seem like science fiction," says Yeoman, "but, in fact, in 2010 Harvard University medical students discovered how to slow down and reverse the ageing process in mice. This anti-ageing therapy could have a dramatic impact on the health and well-being of an ageing population."

There could even be electromagnetic false nails that use nanotechnology to change colour according to a wearer's mood. "Beauty treatments that learn and adapt to ever-changing circumstances will become the norm," he says.

And how about a mirror in your spa changing room that can advise on health and beauty treatments or even how better to apply lipstick? It could happen, says Yeoman. "Research scientists at Harvard University and MIT have developed a prototype mirror with a webcam system with a diagnosis and advice capability."

The gym will also feature strongly in the spa of the future. But it might look very different to the one you go to today, with i-robot personal trainers, do-everything equipment that eliminates the need to keep changing machines, and self-diagnosing and repairing sportswear. "Such is the pace of discovery and progress in technology that the world will see more technological innovation

FUTURE PERFECT One Spa is getting ready to embrace innovative new technologies

Because of our ageing population, futurologists predict a world of sci-fi spas, robot trainers and sportswear that can heal

WORDS RUTH WALKER



in the next ten years compared to the last 150 years. The advent of human-level artificial intelligence - a machine capable of richness of expression and nuance of thought - is on the horizon. So in 2021 your personal robot will be the ultimate machine, with emotions, expert advice, intelligent decisions, and at the same time your personal computer for analysis and performance."

And the days of the rowing machine, cross-trainer or weights will be gone. "Exercise machines will be able to reconfigure themselves into any form to be the ultimate multi-gym because of claytronics. Claytronics is a concept that combines nanorobots and computer science to create individual computers called claytronic atoms or catoms, which can interact with each other to form tangible 3-D objects that a user can interact with."

As for your old trainers and Lycra shorts, chuck them. "In 2021 sports clothing will be impregnated with electro-responsive fabrics, which will enable measurement of skin conductivity (indicating stress and relaxation states), pulse, blood measure," says Yeoman.

"Once a fault has been found - for example, a cut or bruise - how about if the sportswear acted like medicine, repairing that bruise or cut for you? Today, nanotechnology is incorporated into sports apparel to enable professional athletes to help heal minor scrapes. Agion antimicrobial technology



is already used in shoes to keep them clean and help prevent athlete's foot. Nanotechnology could allow shirts to be made of fabric that can destroy airborne germs and pollutants."

Add to that the potential to run the New York marathon from the treadmill and we are well and truly in Steven Spielberg territory. "In 2021 spa-goers will wear special glasses to configure augmented-reality overlays," says Yeoman, "so instead of running on a treadmill they will be running the marathon in New York, or be having a spa treatment not in urban Edinburgh but the paradise of Bali. The glass panels found in a spa or a gym will be able to recreate any environment, including spa-goers' favourite moments, whether it was Scotland's greatest rugby triumph or a scene from a holiday snap. Personalised ambient sounds and smells will be used to create a full-dimensional experience with augmented visuals."

With this in mind, One Spa is launching a futuristic treatment featuring a facial peel that uses quartz crystals, seaweed extracts, argan oil and menthol. Director Mark Perkins says, "The future of the spa is fascinating, given the extraordinary developments we have already experienced over the past ten years. Dr Yeoman has revealed a number of predictions, which we will be following with interest as we constantly strive to be one of the most forward-thinking spas in the UK." ■

www.onespa.com

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HEALTHY BITE

'THE LITTLE BLIGHTERS CRAWL INTO YOUR SUITCASE AND SMUGGLE THEIR WAY HOME'

RUTH WALKER

BITE update (never has a column been more aptly named than this one). Anyone of a sensitive disposition look away now. Those who regularly read my musings (yes, Mother, I mean you) will recollect last week's delicate problem with night-time nibbles. No, not a fridge-raid-at-midnight thing. And not a nice, nuzzly, I-love-you-so-much-I-could-eat-you-all-up thing. More a ooya-dirty-beggar-what-was-that? Now-I'm-going-to-be-scratching-for-a-fortnight thing. Insects. First suspect was midges. Then some other unidentified flying object. Now confirmed to be – pause to claw at itching torso – bedbugs.

The first clue that this might be a mightier problem than the midge was the continued biting despite all my precautions (see previous column for details). The second clue was a corpse.

"Hello, Rentokil? We have a problem."

"How do you know it's bed bugs?" asks the helpful lady in the white protective suit, goggles and anti-bacterial gloves (at least, that's how I imagine she looks).

"I found one," I tell her.

"Have you squished it?"

Why would I squish it? Surely it's better to preserve its accursed body for investigation and therefore confirmation of infestation?

"If blood comes out, you'll know it's a bedbug," she says.

That blood will be mine, fresh from my still warm but increasingly irritated body. Scratch.

Anyway, she sends a man round. A man who knows about these things. Except he doesn't. Not really. "Mmmmm, it could be a bedbug. I'm not sure. But, yes, I think it is. Maybe."

I want to know how it got here. He suggests a recent hotel stay. The little blighters crawl off the bed, into your case and smuggle their way home. Or they get into your luggage in the aircraft hold (they're small and agile enough to get through zips in suitcases – a bit like that wee Chinese man in *Ocean's Eleven*, except with more legs), then set up home in your wardrobe, waiting to pounce.

Don't think you're immune in swanky five-star hotels. Oh no! "Edinburgh has everything from five-star hotels to budget hostels, and we've been in practically every one," Bug Man tells me proudly.

They can live for a year without eating. They're in no hurry. They just bide their time, waiting for the best, most meaty host. In this case, me. And don't think washing will get shot of them – 30 degrees is too darned cold. They need 40 minimum, but 60 is better. Sigh. Scratch.

Bug Man offers to bug-bust the room. And the boys' room (to be safe).

"How much?" I ask.

"£450. Plus VAT. And you'd better get a new mattress too."

Sob. Scratch.

Another man comes next day. He has a pump, a spray and a mask. His bottles bear a skull and crossbones. I have faith in this man. He has the power to kill. He'll have to come back, he says. This dose will wipe out the mums and dads. The babies take a bit longer to die.

As for me, I've decided. Five-star travel and a supermodel appetite? When I come back, I'm coming back as a bug. ■

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ADVERTISING FEATURE



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Ask
the



expert
with Mr Carlo Benzoni

HERNIA SURGERY I was recently diagnosed with a groin hernia and would like to know more about key-hole surgery please.
Roger, Kirkcaldy

What are the advantages of key-hole surgery? The main ones are less post-operative pain, quicker recovery and prompt return to normal activities.

What types of hernia are suitable for key-hole surgery? Inguinal hernias (groin), umbilical hernias (belly button) or hernias appearing at the site of a



previous scar (incisional), they may all benefit from key-hole surgery.

I was advised to have my groin hernia repaired – will I be able to go home the same day of my surgery? The majority of patients undergoing key-hole repair will be able to go home the same day of the operation.

What if I don't get my hernia fixed? A bit of bowel might get trapped inside the hernia (strangulation). This condition usually requires emergency surgery.

Mr Carlo Benzoni is Consultant General and Laparoscopic Surgeon at Spire Edinburgh Hospitals

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