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Alameda Made

Call of the Wild



while growing up, Hall Newbegin spent countless hours shouldering a backpack, exploring the wooded paths and meadow trails of the Pacific Northwest near his childhood home in Portland, Ore., inhaling the fragrances of nature deep into his lungs—and life. These aromatic memories led Newbegin, a Vassar philosophy major, to launch Juniper Ridge from his kitchen laboratory four years ago. Demand for his company's Western Wild Goods products soon overwhelmed Newbegin's home space, and, for more than three years, Juniper Ridge has operated at Alameda Point, in a light, airy facility redolent with the perfume of forest and field.

Juniper Ridge's soaps, sachets, incenses and teas capture "the essence of wild" right from the start, thanks to a practice Newbegin refers to as "wildcrafting"—gathering plant trimmings from Northern California's hills and vales. Wildcrafting is a form of sustainable harvesting and, Newbegin notes, it reduces fire hazards. The practice

is the heartbeat of Juniper Ridge. "Everyone in the company does it," Newbegin says, "including accountants."

Once the fresh materials arrive in Alameda, a unique process transforms them into luscious soaps, with a twist. Unlike soap manufacturing that utilizes perfumed essential oils, Juniper Ridge soaks raw materials, such as sage, pine, laurel and cedar, in oil, creating direct infusions that concentrate the spirit—the earthy soul—of the plants. These infusions are added to a rich coconut-oil base to create a product that delivers a bathing experience that literally brings the outdoors in.

Newbegin also calls forth scent memories with his incense products. The 100 percent wood-resin-based sticks are "for people who don't like incense because it smells too sweet," he says. Burning Juniper Ridge incense is like "sitting around a campfire" and evokes nights spent beneath twinkling stars.

For Juniper Ridge, green is good, a philosophy manifested in the product line; in the goal of using 100 percent recycled packaging; and in the practice of giving back—10 percent of the company's net profits are donated to organizations that defend western wilderness.

Juniper Ridge products can be found at Bay Area farmers markets, Whole Foods, Berkeley Bowl and the Alameda Marketplace. They are also available through the L.L. Bean, Woolrich and Isabella catalogs. Get more information at www.juniperridge.com or by calling (800) 205-9499.

—By Noelle Robbins

