



➔ She says some countries have designated woodlands and forests for relaxation and connecting with nature. Trees naturally give off phytoncides, or wood essential oils, she says. When inhaled, she claims they have been scientifically proven to have a beneficial impact on our nervous systems. Being in a wooded area can reduce stress levels and generally improve our quality of life.

Faith began practising forest bathing seven years ago, but noticed more people were keen to tap into its benefits following the pandemic.

“After the pandemic people responded to it by going outside, going out in their gardens, going for walks,” she says.

“We spend our lives with blinkers on, but people were recognising how they felt good and it made me realise people were looking at alternative ways to make them feel good. We were outside and that is where forest bathing comes into its own because it is mindfulness in nature.”

To feel the benefits of nature we need to do it “mindfully”, according to Faith. “Mindfulness is the



**GLADE FRESH:** Top, Faith in a clearing at the Victorian arboretum where she works as a part-time curator and, above, checking out the flowers on a witch hazel.

latest buzz word and thankfully people everywhere seem to be aware of it and its uses in everyday life,” she says.

Embracing the true benefits of nature involves switching off from everything else, being fully aware of the environment you are walking in and not just passing through.

“This is where Forest Bathing UK can help. Through various guided activities and exercises, everyone can benefit from becoming more mindful in a natural environment,” says Faith.

“Connecting in nature can help everyone not only connect with nature but also connect with themselves and others.

“People often find that once they become more aware of their surroundings, they become happier and more rounded as individuals, relationships strengthened, goals achieved and hurdles overcome.”

Such is Faith’s knowledge and expertise around the benefits of being among trees that she has written a book. *The Nature Remedy*, published by HarperCollins, came out during the pandemic. It focuses on forest bathing, along with other beneficial aspects that nature can bring to our health and wellbeing.

“There is so much more about nature which has a positive effect on us as human beings. It starts with the earth and sky. It really does come back to basics, the planet we inhabit down to the food we eat, the medicines we take, the animals we live alongside as well as trees, plants and flowers. I talk about mushrooms, moss, the oceans, the weather and the seasons because they have an effect on us as well,” adds Faith.

But she admits writing a book took her out of her comfort zone. “It wasn’t easy because I spend my life away from a computer and a laptop,” she says, referring to the two years it took from vision to fruition.

The book, along with Faith’s walks and her wider work in horticulture, are tools for encouraging others to experience and practise those techniques to manage their own mental health and well-being.

She is also involved in a new feature at this year’s Harrogate Spring Flower Show in April and in 2016 received the Silver Gilt Award for her Healthy Roots garden designed around the therapeutic benefits of nature at the Harrogate Autumn Flower Festival.

“It is a way of life for me and it’s really important that I walk my walk and talk my talk – I wouldn’t feel authentic if I didn’t,” she says.

“I know it helps people, from the science I know it helps people and it is so easy. I like to think that nature should be, it’s free to everybody. We are an animal that occurs naturally on this planet, the air we breathe is from nature. Magic really does happen when you go into nature.”

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