

#BEAUTY

Deep Hydration for Hands and Feet

This simple blend is an effective way to nourish dry hands and feet without expensive treatments



Dry, rough hands and feet are common, especially with frequent washing, weather changes, or long hours on your feet. A simple at-home remedy using everyday ingredients can help restore softness, lock in moisture, and gently smooth the skin.

The Hydrating Blend

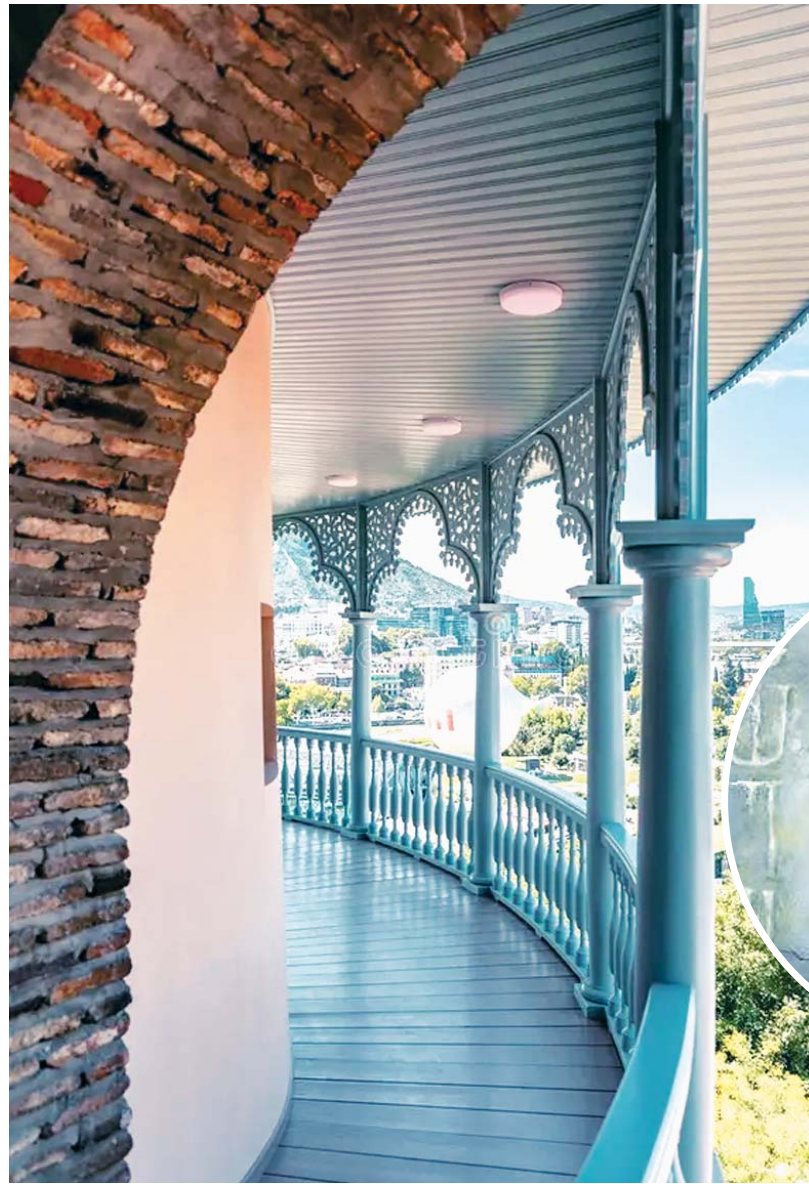
- This DIY mixture combines three ingredients known for their moisturizing and skin-softening properties:
- **2 tablespoons Vaseline (petroleum jelly):** Creates a protective barrier that locks in moisture and prevents water loss.
- **1 teaspoon baby oil:** Adds lightweight hydration and helps soften dry, flaky skin.
- **½ teaspoon baking soda:** Acts as a mild exfoliant to help remove dead skin and improve texture.

How It Works

Vaseline seals moisture into the skin, making it ideal for very dry areas like heels, cuticles, and knuckles. Baby oil penetrates the skin to add softness and flexibility. Baking soda gently buffs away dry, rough patches, allowing the moisturizing ingredients to absorb more effectively.

How to Use

1. In a small bowl, mix all ingredients until smooth.
2. Wash hands or feet with warm water and pat dry.
3. Massage the mixture into the skin, focusing on rough areas.



Queen Darejan's Palace or Sachino in Tbilisi, Georgia.

• Verna Mohon

She gave birth to 23 children while foreign empires were torturing her family to death for refusing to convert to Islam. Georgia, 1624. Queen Darejan received the news every royal wife dreaded: her mother-in-law, Queen Ketevan, had been tortured to death in Persia. They'd tried to force her to convert to Islam. When she refused, they strangled her with a bowstring, then dismembered her body.

Darejan was pregnant. Again. It was perhaps her eighth or ninth pregnancy, she'd already lost count. She had small children clinging to her skirts. Her husband, King Teimuraz I, was in hiding, trying to hold together what remained of their fractured kingdom.

And she had to keep going. Keep bearing children. Keep preserving the royal line. Keep surviving. Because that's what Georgian queens did in the 17th century: they endured.

Georgia in the 1600s was trapped between two empires that wanted to destroy it. The Persian Safavid Empire to the east. The Ottoman Empire to the west. Both Muslim powers. Both determined to either convert or eliminate the Christian Georgian kingdoms that stood between them.

Georgian royalty became pawns,

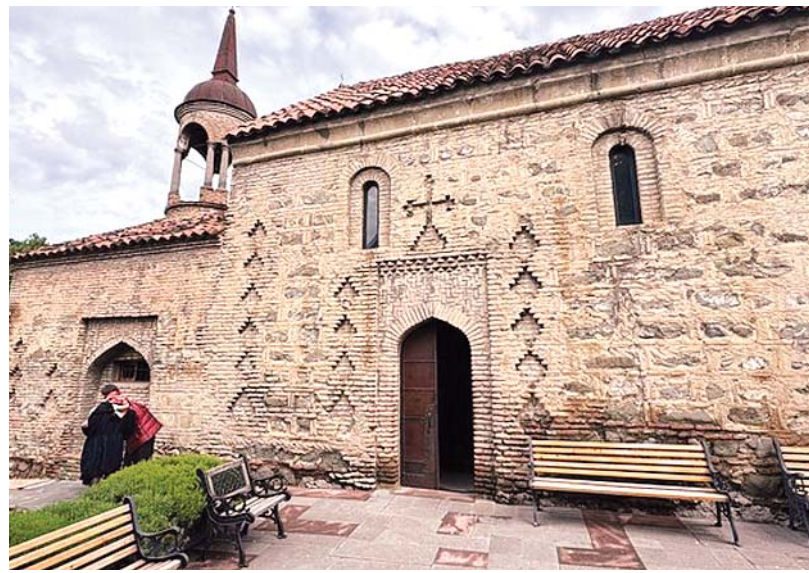


Georgian royalty became pawns, hostages, victims. Shah Abbas I of Persia was particularly brutal. He didn't just want Georgian territory, he wanted Georgian souls. Convert to Islam, or watch your family die.

Teimuraz I refused. So, the Shah took his mother, Queen Ketevan, hostage. For nine years, she was imprisoned in Shiraz. For nine years, they tried to force her conversion. Promises of release, threats of death, everything in between. She refused.

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Her daughter-in-law Darejan, back in Georgia, learned that her children's grandmother had been murdered for her faith. That this was the price of remaining



Without Her, There Would Be No Georgia

Teimuraz was often absent, fighting, in exile, negotiating with one empire against another. Darejan managed the household, raised the children, maintained whatever stability was possible. When Teimuraz was forced into exile, Darejan went with him. Taking as many surviving children as she could. Leaving behind the ones who were hostages, or already dead, or scattered across a region where Georgian royalty had become refugees in their own land.



Queen Darejan.

#EMPIRES



Christian in a region where Christian kingdoms were being systematically crushed.

And she was expected to keep having children. To keep producing heirs. To keep ensuring the royal line survived, even though survival meant watching those children face the same threats.

Over her lifetime, Darejan gave birth approximately 23 times. Twenty-three pregnancies in an era when childbirth was the leading cause of death for women. Twenty-three times risking her life. Twenty-three children born into a kingdom under constant siege, where royal children were targets for kidnapping, forced conversion, or murder.

This wasn't the romantic image of medieval queenship. This was industrial-scale motherhood in the service of dynastic survival. The Shah didn't stop with Queen Ketevan. He took several of Teimuraz and Darejan's sons hostage. He demanded they convert to Islam or he'd execute them. The boys refused. The Shah killed them.

Darejan lost multiple children, not to disease or accident, but to deliberate murder by a foreign power determined to break her family's faith and resistance. And Darejan couldn't stop having children, because the dynasty needed heirs. The kingdom needed continuity. If the royal line died out, Georgia's independence died with it.

So, Darejan kept bearing children while burying children. Kept managing the royal household while her husband fought wars. Kept holding together what remained of their family while empires tried to tear it apart. She wasn't just a mother. She was a strategic necessity.

Every pregnancy was an act of defiance against the empires trying to eliminate Georgian Christianity. Every surviving child was proof that Georgia would continue. Every daughter she raised, every son she protected, was a victory against forced conversion and cultural extinction.

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She lived through decades of this. Decades of pregnancy, childbirth, infant deaths, childhood diseases, and political murders. Decades of uncertainty about which children would survive to adulthood. Which would be taken hostage. Which would die for refusing to convert.

By the time she died in 1668, Darejan had outlived many of her 23 children. She'd seen her kingdom torn apart by foreign invasions. She'd watched empires use her family as pawns in their territorial games. But she'd kept the royal line alive.

Today, we barely remember Queen Darejan. Georgian history



Without Darejan's 23 pregnancies, there would have been no Georgian royal heirs. Without her household management during Teimuraz's absences, there would have been no stable base for his resistance. Without her endurance through decades of loss and exile, the dynasty would have collapsed. But because her labor was 'women's work,' childbirth, child-rearing, household management, it doesn't get the same historical recognition as military victories.

focuses on the kings, on Teimuraz's military campaigns, his political maneuvering, his eventual consolidation of power. On the dramatic martyrdom of Queen Ketevan, who was canonized as a saint.

But Darejan? She was 'just' the wife. The mother. The woman who had 23 children and managed the household and endured exile and buried her babies and kept going.

Her labor was private, invisible, relentless. No battles named after her. No dramatic last stands. Just decades of bearing children, raising them, losing them, bearing more.

Here's what makes Darejan's story important: She represents the invisible infrastructure of royal survival. While historians write

about kings and battles and treaties, women like Darejan were doing the biological and domestic labor that made dynasties possible.

Without Darejan's 23 pregnancies, there would have been no Georgian royal heirs. Without her household management during Teimuraz's absences, there would have been no stable base for his resistance. Without her endurance through decades of loss and exile, the dynasty would have collapsed. But because her labor was 'women's work,' childbirth, child-rearing, household management, it doesn't get the same historical recognition as military victories. Because that's what queens did: they bore the unbearable, privately, relentlessly, until they died.

Modern Georgia barely remembers Queen Darejan. There are no grand monuments to her 23 pregnancies. No statues commemorating her endurance. No epic poems about the children she buried.

But every Georgian king who came after her, every continuation of the royal line, every bit of Georgian independence that survived the 17th century, all of it rested on the foundation of her body, her labor, her losses.

She was the invisible infrastructure of royal survival. History barely remembers her name. But without her, there might not have been a Georgia to remember.

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#COCHINEAL FARMING

A Natural Carmine Dye



Because it is derived from natural sources, carmine is often preferred over synthetic dyes, especially in products marketed as natural or organic

Cochineal farming is a traditional agricultural practice centered on the cultivation of *Opuntia* cactus, commonly known as prickly pear, and a small scale insect that lives on its pads. This practice has been used for centuries to produce carmine, one of the most valuable natural red dyes in the world.

The *Opuntia* Cactus

Opuntia species are hardy cacti characterized by their flat, green pads called cladodes. These pads serve as both the photosynthetic surface of the plant and the habitat for cochineal insects. *Opuntia* thrives in arid and semi-arid climates, requires minimal water, and grows well in poor soils, making it ideal for sustainable agriculture.

Cochineal Insects and Their Biology

Cochineal insects (*Dactylopius coccus*) are small, scale insects that feed exclusively on *Opuntia* cactus pads. The insects attach themselves to the surface of the pads and feed on plant sap. To protect themselves from predators, the insects produce carminic acid, a deep red compound that acts as a natural defense mechanism.

Female cochineal insects contain especially high concentrations of carminic acid, which is why they are the primary focus of harvesting.

Farming and Harvesting Process

Cochineal farming begins by intentionally inoculating healthy *Opuntia* pads with cochineal insects. Farmers carefully manage the cactus plants to ensure optimal conditions for insect growth, includ-



Production of Carmine Dye

Once dried, the cochineal insects are processed to extract carminic acid. This compound is further refined and combined with mineral salts, such as aluminum or calcium, to produce carmine dye. The resulting pigment is known for its vibrant red colour, excellent stability, and resistance to fading.

Uses of Carmine

Carmine is widely used as a natural dye in:

- Food products (such as yogurts, beverages, and confectionery)
- Cosmetics (lipsticks, blushes, and eye products)
- Pharmaceuticals
- Textiles and traditional art

Because it is derived from natural sources, carmine is often preferred over synthetic dyes, especially in products marketed as natural or organic.

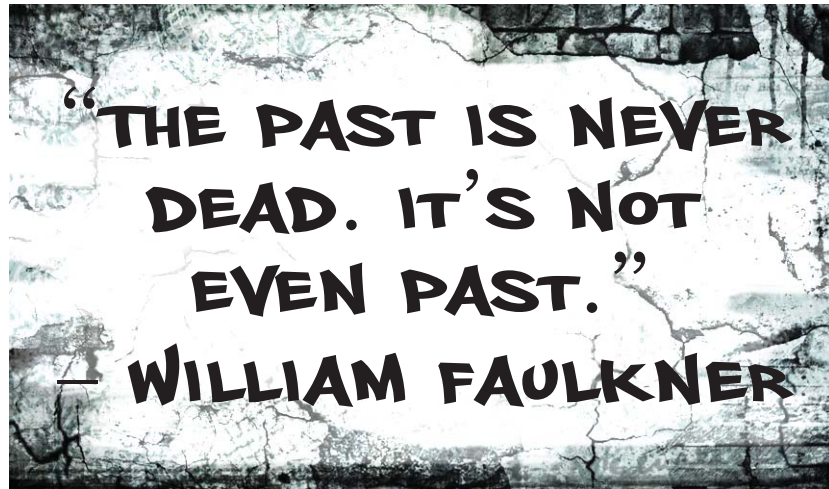
Environmental and Economic Importance

Cochineal farming is considered environmentally sustainable. It relies on a drought-resistant crop, produces minimal waste, and supports biodiversity in dry regions. Economically, it provides income for rural communities, particularly in parts of Latin America, Africa, and the Mediterranean.

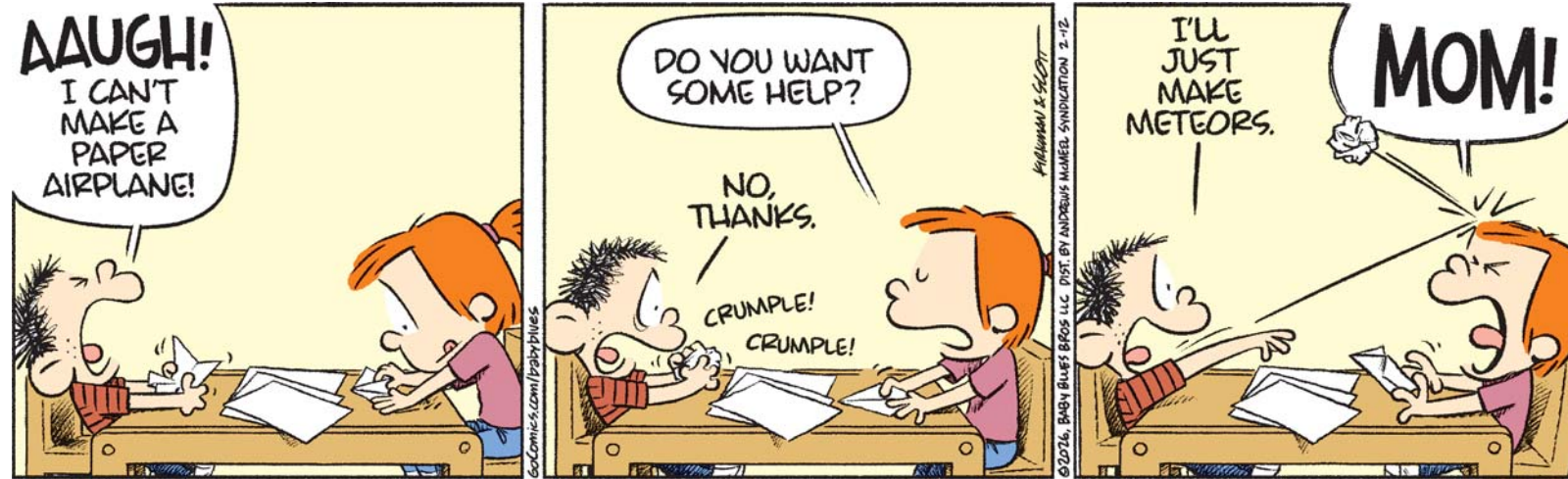
The cultivation of cochineal insects on *Opuntia* cactus pads is a remarkable example of how natural systems can be harnessed to produce valuable materials. Through the insects' production of carminic acid, farmers are able to obtain carmine, a vibrant, durable, and historically significant natural dye that continues to be important in modern industries.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman