



The Many Uses of Hemp

Hemp is one of the most useful plants on Earth.

For thousands of years, humans have used parts of the hemp plant for food, textiles, paper, fabric, and fuel oil. Today, modern processing technologies have made it possible to create alternatives to gasoline, plastic, and other petroleum products that can help the human race lessen its reliance on polluting and expensive fossil fuels.

The hemp plant is a renewable resource that can be produced domestically. It grows quickly, naturally resists plant diseases, requires little weeding, thrives in most climates, and [enriches the soil](#) it grows in.

Here are some of its most important applications:

Food and Nutrition

Hempseeds and hemp oil are highly [nutritious](#) and delicious. Hempseeds are an excellent source of protein, minerals, and dietary fibre. Hemp is the only plant that contains all of the essential fatty acids and amino acids required by the human body. These essential nutrients affect a variety of body functions, including metabolism, the skin, mood, behaviour, the brain, and the heart.

Many people eat fish and take fish oil supplements to get these essential fats, however concerns around [over fishing](#) and the [chemical contamination](#) of modern fish have made many choose to switch to hemp instead. It is an especially excellent option for [vegetarians](#).

Hemp is also good for [animals](#), and some veterinarians recommend including it in the diets of pets and livestock. In Europe, fishermen sprinkle hempseed on the water as an effective [bait](#). When hempseed is included in [bird seed](#), songbirds will pick it out of the mix as they prefer it over other seeds.

Hemp foods are becoming more and more [popular](#) as the public discovers the nutritional benefits and culinary uses of hemp.

Body Care

Due to its high content of beneficial oils and natural emollient properties, hemp is becoming a common [ingredient](#) in lotions and many other skin, hair, and cosmetic products. It is a good alternative to the [toxic chemicals](#) present in many petroleum based lotions and cosmetics.

Paper

Hemp is an ideal material for making paper. It regenerates in the field in months (unlike [trees](#) which can take 30 years or more to become harvestable after planting.) Moving towards the use of hemp for paper can help save the world's forests.

[Historically](#), hemp has been used to make paper for thousands of years. It makes a fine quality paper that is naturally acid free and does not become yellow and brittle or [disintegrate](#) over time like conventional paper.

Fabric, Textiles, and Rope

Hemp can be used to make a variety of fabrics, similar to but more durable than cotton. Hemp is also excellent for making rugs and other textiles. The word [canvas](#) comes from the Latin word for hemp.

The oldest known woven [fabric](#) was made from hemp, as were Levi Strauss' [original denim](#) jeans, and the first American [flag](#). It was a common material for clothing until the [cotton](#) industry gained strength in America.

Hemp is the traditional [rope making](#) fibre due to its flexibility, strength, and resistance to water damage. In past centuries, hemp was extremely important to the Navy, the shipping trade, and fishing because it was used to make ropes, riggings, nets, and sails.

Fuel

For centuries, Hemp oil was used as lamp oil. It began to be phased out in America in the 1870s when [petroleum](#) was introduced.

Today, hemp oil can be used to create biofuels to [replace gasoline](#) for diesel engines. Unlike fossil fuels, biofuels are renewable and produce less of the greenhouse gas [carbon monoxide](#).

Plastic Alternatives

Standard plastic is made from fossil fuels using [toxic chemicals](#). Almost everything we buy is wrapped in cellophane and our landfills are full of it. A variety of alternatives to plastic can be made from hemp.

In 1941, [Henry Ford](#) held a media event where he swung an axe at a prototype car body made of hemp and other plant material to prove its strength. The technology was never put into mass production, cars continued to be made of steel, and plastics made from petrochemicals became the norm.

Fortunately, the number of available [products](#) made from hemp plastics is on the increase as awareness of the importance of developing sustainable alternatives grows.

Building Materials

Hemp based materials can replace wood and other materials used to build [homes](#) and other structures including foundations, walls, shingles, paneling, pipes, and paint.

The modern hemp building materials [Hempcrete](#) and [Isochanvre](#) are lightweight, waterproof, fireproof, self-insulating, and resistant to pests.

Hemp's Past and Future

If hemp is so useful and practical, why hasn't everyone heard of it? The answer lies primarily in politics. In the United States, growing hemp is largely prohibited and there is a great fear around it due to its resemblance to marijuana. Hemp may look like marijuana, however it [does not contain the active chemicals](#) that cause mind-altering effects.

Historically, hemp was important in America and several of the founding fathers grew it on their estates. [Thomas Jefferson](#) himself said, "Hemp is of first necessity to the wealth and protection of the country." There were times when farmers were legally [required](#) to grow it. During World War Two, the American government [encouraged farmers](#) to grow it to help aid the war effort.

In the 1930s, a "[reefer madness](#)" campaign began in the United States to stir up fear around marijuana and hemp. Today it is clear that these beginnings of "[the war on drugs](#)" were pushed into being by the newspaper, cotton, and petroleum [industries](#) which have all benefited financially from hemp prohibition. There are many people in the United States [working](#) to make growing hemp legal, however for the time being the laws remain [restrictive](#).

In Canada, the cultivation of hemp has been allowed by the federal government since 1998 with a special [license](#). Fortunately, as hemp becomes a growing agricultural sector in Canada and [other countries](#), the availability of hemp based products will continue to [grow](#) worldwide.

Links

A Quick Guide to Hemp

<http://www.saskhemp.com/hemp101/hemp101.htm>

an introduction to the many uses of hemp

The Emperor Wears no Clothes

<http://www.jackherer.com/chapters.html>

the extensive and well-researched full text of the book that helped start the modern hemp revolution, in print since 1985

Environmental Benefits of Hemp

http://www.eap.mcgill.ca/CPH_3.htm

a summary of the many environmental benefits of hemp from McGill University, including agricultural factors such as how hemp benefits the soil

Industrial Hemp - an alternative to our problems?

<http://www.authenticbusiness.co.uk/archive/hemp>

an excellent article on the uses of hemp from a British progressive business magazine

North American Industrial Hemp Council

<http://naihc.org>

information about industrial hemp from an agricultural association

Basic Uses of Industrial Hemp: Food, Fuel, Fiber

<http://www.thehia.org/faqs/faq7.htm>

description of the basic uses of hemp from a hemp trade association

Food and Agriculture: Hemp

[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/crop761](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/crop761)

an overview of agricultural hemp from the Alberta Government

Hemp: A New Crop with New Uses for North America

<http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/ncnu02/v5-284.html>

a chapter from an academic agriculture book reviewing the various uses for industrial hemp

History and Benefits of Hemp

<http://www.sdearthtimes.com/et0199/et0199s11.html>

a summary of the uses and background history of hemp

Nutty Hemp a Hot Food Trend

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16637630>

a news story about the growing popularity of hemp foods

Hemp Seed: The most Nutritionally Complete Food Source in the World

<http://www.ratical.org/renewables/hempseed1.html>

information on the health benefits of eating hempseed

Hemp Seeds

<http://www.innvista.com/health/foods/hemp/hempseed.htm>

more information on dietary hempseed

Micronutrient Information Center: Essential Fatty Acids

<http://lpi.oregonstate.edu/infocenter/othernuts/omega3fa>

an overview of the importance of essential fatty acids (EFAs) in the body

Are You Getting Enough Essential Fatty Acids?

<http://www.alive.com/3953a2a2.php>

an article on EFAs aimed at vegetarians

Efficacy of Dietary Hempseed Oil in Patients with Atopic Dermatitis

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=pubmed>

[&cmd=Retrieve&dopt=AbstractPlus&list_uids=16019622](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=pubmed&cmd=Retrieve&dopt=AbstractPlus&list_uids=16019622)

results of a Finnish scientific study that showed dietary hemp oil improved symptoms of contact dermatitis

Hemp as a Nutreaceutical for Animals

<http://www.hemptions.co.za/Uses/Animal/HempForAnimals.htm>

the benefits of feeding hemp to pets and livestock

Carp Passion: Hemp

<http://www.carp-passion.com/Bait/Hemp.htm>

an article from a British fishing website about using hempseed as bait

Hemp Body Care Benefits

<http://www.hempoilcan.com/benefits.html>

the benefits of using hemp in skin, hair, and other body care products

Hempcar.org

<http://www.hempcar.org>

the story of a hemp-fueled car that toured North America raising awareness about biofuels

Hemp Plastic

<http://www.hempplastic.com>

more information about hemp based alternatives to plastic

Hemp For Houses

<http://www.life.ca/nl/108/hemphouse.html>

more information on the possibilities for using hemp in construction

House of Hemp

http://nutiva.com/about/media/2004_01_10.php

the story of a house built with hemp materials in Ontario

USA Hemp Museum

<http://www.hempmuseum.org>

extensive information about the history of and modern uses for hemp

America's Harried Hemp History

<http://www.hemphasis.net/0102dvorak.htm>

an article on the history of hemp in America from colonial times to today

Hemp: Beyond Peak Oil

<http://www.beyondpeak.com/hemp-beyondpeak.html>

information about hemp's uses and the history of prohibition from a site about the impact of the decline of fossil fuels

Hemp for Victory

http://www.archive.org/details/Hemp_for_victory_1942

the 1942 American Government film designed to encourage farmers to grow more hemp to help the war effort

Frequently Asked Questions about Hemp and Canada's Hemp Industry

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/substancontrol/hemp-chanvre/about-apropos/faq/index_e.html#7

information about Canada's industrial hemp rules and regulations, also available in [French](#)

Hemp Grows With Technological Advances:

Plant replacing petroleum-based products for varied industrial uses

<http://www.businessedge.ca/article.cfm/newsID/14336.cfm>

an article from a business magazine about the exponential growth of hemp in the financial marketplace and trends for the future

[home](#) | [about](#) | [samples](#) | [contact](#)

<http://www.informationdistillery.com/hemp.htm>