

"Why use up the forests, which were centuries in the making, and the mines, which required ages to lay down, if we can get the equivalent of forest and mineral products in the annual growth of the hemp fields?" – Henry Ford

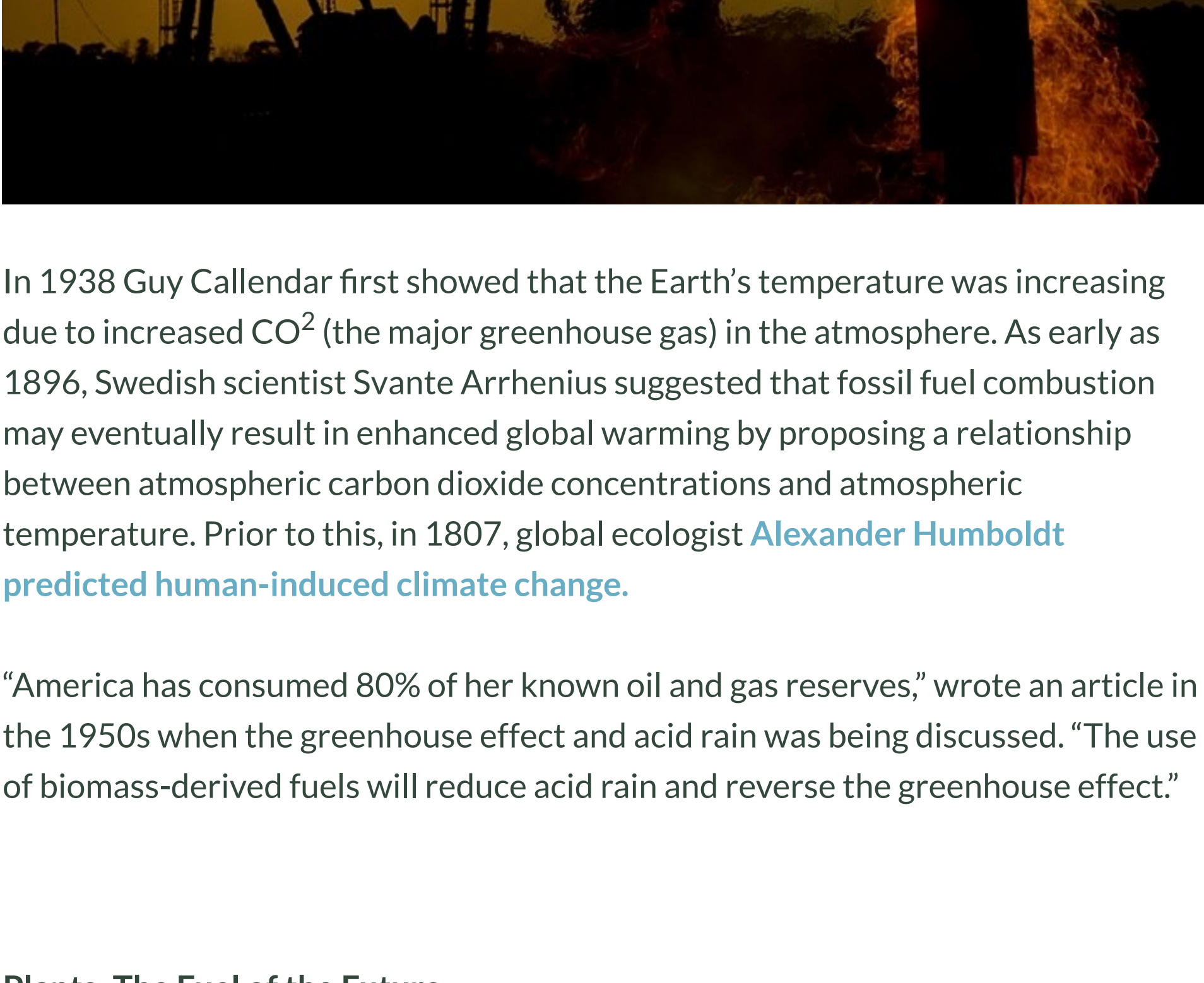


In 1941, Henry Ford built a car out of plastic from hemp and other plant material that ran on hemp fuel. Why aren't we driving it today? asks [Return to Now](#).

Ford's 1941 bioplastic Model T was made of hemp, flax, wheat, and spruce pulp, which made

the car lighter than fiberglass and ten times tougher than steel, wrote the *New York Times* on February 2, 1941. The car ran on ethanol made from hemp or other agricultural waste. Ford's experimental model was deemed a step toward the realization of his dream to "grow automobiles from soil," wrote *Popular Mechanics* in their December 1941 issue and reduce greenhouse gases—already known to occur by then.

Fossil Fuels and Global Warming

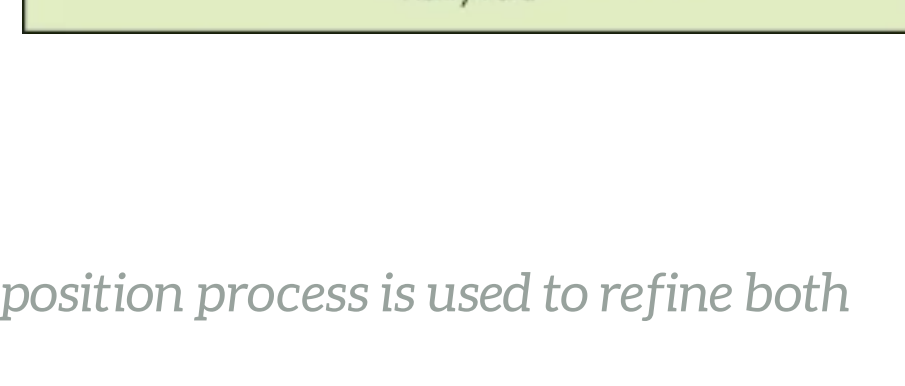


In 1938 Guy Callendar first showed that the Earth's temperature was increasing due to increased CO² (the major greenhouse gas) in the atmosphere. As early as 1896, Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius suggested that fossil fuel combustion may eventually result in enhanced global warming by proposing a relationship between atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations and atmospheric temperature. Prior to this, in 1807, global ecologist [Alexander Humboldt](#) [predicted human-induced climate change](#).

"America has consumed 80% of her known oil and gas reserves," wrote an article in the 1950s when the greenhouse effect and acid rain was being discussed. "The use of biomass-derived fuels will reduce acid rain and reverse the greenhouse effect."

Plants: The Fuel of the Future

In 1925, Ford told the New York Times: "The fuel of the future is going to come from fruit like that smach out by the road, or from apples, weeds, sawdust—almost anything. There is fuel in every bit of vegetable matter that can be fermented. There's enough alcohol in one year's yield of an acre of potatoes to drive the machinery necessary to cultivate the fields for a hundred years."

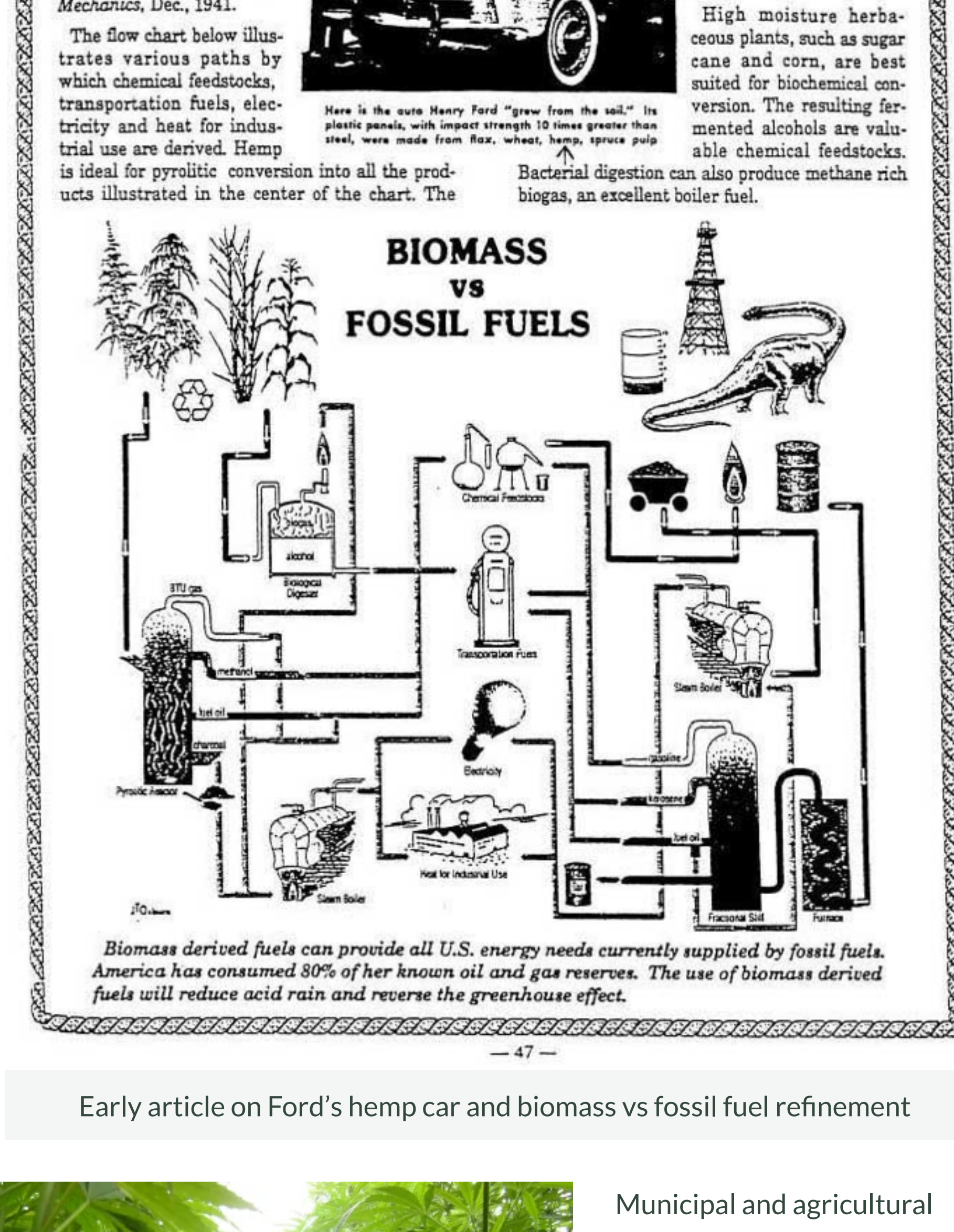


"Why use up the forest which were centuries in the making and the mines which required ages to lay down, if we can get the equivalent of forest and mineral products in the annual growth of the fields?"

— Henry Ford —

Hemp is ideal for pyrolytic conversion into chemical feedstocks, transportation fuels, electricity, and heat for industrial uses, they reported.

"The same basic thermochemical decomposition process is used to refine both biomass and fossil fuels."



Biomass derived fuels can provide all U.S. energy needs currently supplied by fossil fuels. America has consumed 80% of her known oil and gas reserves. The use of biomass derived fuels will reduce acid rain and reverse the greenhouse effect.

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Early article on Ford's hemp car and biomass vs fossil fuel refinement



Municipal and agricultural wastes are highly suitable for this process also. They can act as supplemental resources to supply up to 10% of our energy needs. High moisture herbaceous plants—such as sugar cane and corn—are best suited for biochemical conversion into fermented alcohols, valuable as chemical feedstocks and—with bacterial digestion—can also produce methane rich biogas, an excellent boiler fuel.

Growing hemp in the United States was [essentially outlawed in 1937](#) due to its

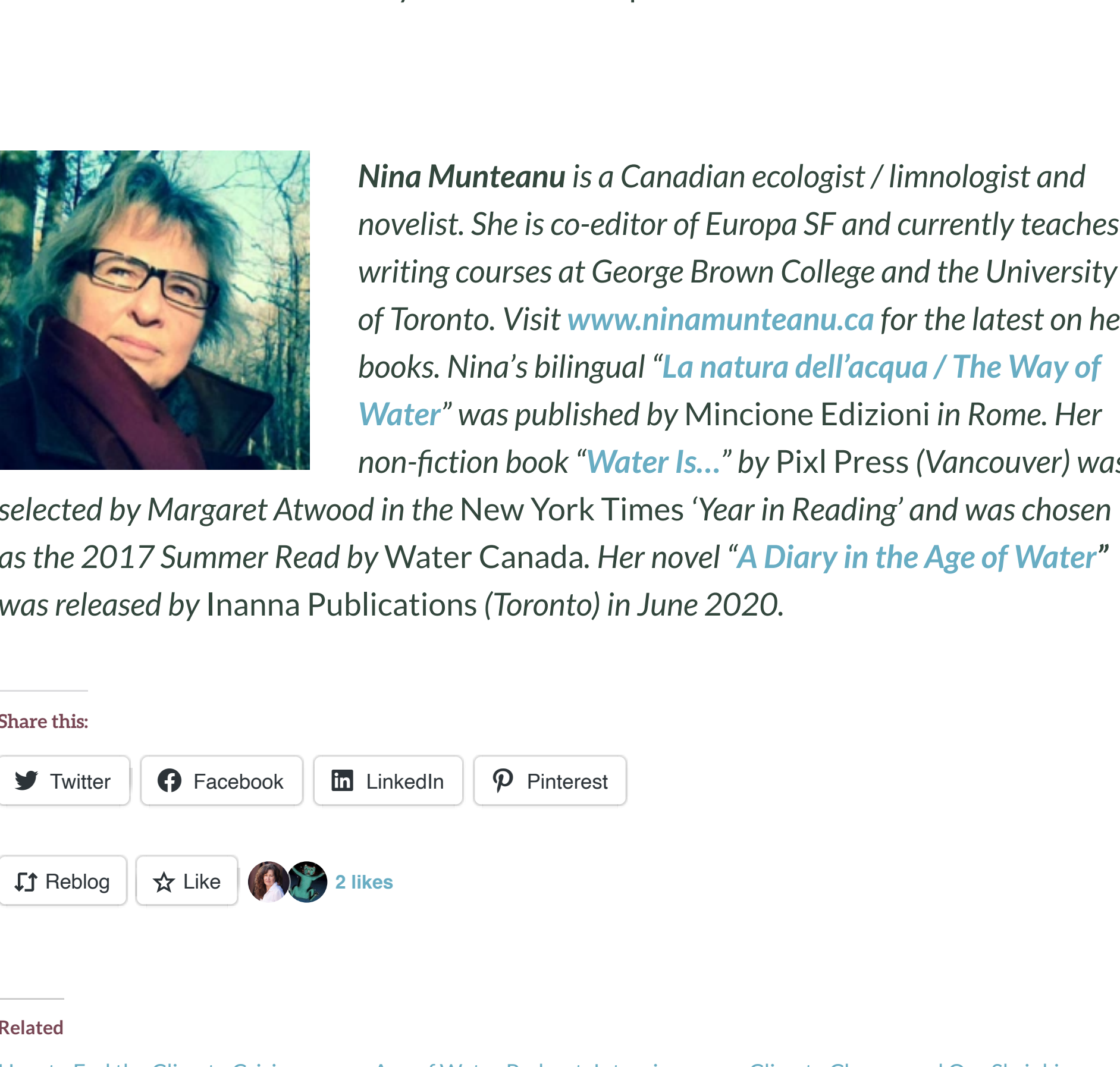
association with its THC-containing cousin—in truth, it was outlawed through efforts by lobbying lobbyists representing powerful industries such as the oil, plastics (DuPont) and paper industries.



Henry Ford sits next to his hemp field

Ford continued to grow hemp illegally for some years after the Federal ban, hoping to become independent of the petroleum industry. But, Ford ultimately found it impractical to mass-produce vehicles that relied upon a steady supply of hemp.

Recently, investor Bruce Dietzen created a prototype of Ford's hemp car. Given that the carbon footprint of manufacturing a standard car is 10 tons, hemp can sequester enough carbon to at least render the car carbon-neutral if not carbon-negative, argues Dietzen.



TV show host Jay Leno stands with current hemp car

The [Hemp Farming Act](#) passed on December 2018, legalized hemp production in the USA. With the act, Ford and Dietzen's prototypes may yet help eradicate the fossil fuel-based auto industry and make transportation sustainable.



Nina Munteanu is a Canadian ecologist / limnologist and novelist. She is co-editor of Europa SF and currently teaches writing courses at George Brown College and the University of Toronto. Visit www.ninamunteanu.ca for the latest on her books. Nina's bilingual "La natura dell'acqua / The Way of Water" was published by Mincione Edizioni in Rome. Her non-fiction book "Water Is..." by Pixl Press (Vancouver) was

selected by Margaret Atwood in the New York Times 'Year in Readings' and was chosen as the 2017 Summer Read by Water Canada. Her novel "A Diary in the Age of Water" was released by Inanna Publications (Toronto) in June 2020.

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EarthCitizen

August 23, 2022 at 5:24 pm

What happens when it catches fire? Does it give the hemp a high?

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thealiennextdoor

August 23, 2022 at 7:57 pm



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Steve

September 22, 2022 at 3:38 pm

No. It would not. 😊 There is simply not any meaningful amount of anything psychoactive in the material. Besides, the part of the plant used for making the material is not where you would even look for cannabinoids. Hemp fibers comes from the stems. It is processed and the rest is discarded.

Even if you were to use actual psychoactive cannabis (aka recreational weed), the treatment and processing of the material would destroy the cannabinoids anyway. Just time itself will degrade the cannabinoids.

Also, the temperature needed to burn hemp plastics is pretty high, other materials would be up in smoke before the hemp plastic. Hemp composites can endure several hundred degrees C.

So the bottom line is, even if you made a heroic attempt at getting high on hemp, especially products made with hemp – you would just waste time and energy and not get high.

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Oleh

October 15, 2022 at 10:11 am

How difficult is it to make hemp plastic or is it cost effective now?

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Pingback: [What Can Hemp Be Used For? - Hempassion](#)

David Ray

December 22, 2022 at 1:01 am

Obviously we have come quite away in last 6 years when Donald Trump signed 2018 farm Bill

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It open agriculture hemp up and it's only just growing exponentially

Every day. Hemp seed is a food additive and a fuel component

It can propagate anywhere. Average plant and harvest time is 9 months. Produces cloth of higher grade than cotton . Military canvas ,dungarees ,tents,flooring lumber, plywood

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Roy Gokenbach

November 15, 2023 at 11:56 pm

Weed for the good of mankind.

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thealiennextdoor

November 17, 2023 at 6:44 pm

...humankind...

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Albert Keller

January 20, 2024 at 1:13 am

In the forties I wore Pants and different clothes made from Hemp they were very strong and not expensive

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thealiennextdoor

January 23, 2024 at 10:25 pm

Very cool, Albert!

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Momma05

March 18, 2024 at 1:02 pm

hemp was used for industrial use for hundreds of years, clothing too and th go to food. we need to get back to growing hemp. love hemp clothing & health care products & hemp milk, seeds and having a hemp car would seem better than this fiberglass rigid crap now used in cars. we just replace expensive quarter panels. i would hope hemp is truly harder and more easily manipulated for repairs as well. FYI. from my simple research there is an abundance of carbon products as the planet actual makes it daily. it is NOT billion year old organic dead life that cant be made. worth researching if you are not familiar. again govt always creates the illusion of scarcity, and carbon is exactly what makes life forms large. dinosaurs and plants thrived on high carbon levels.

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thealiennextdoor

March 23, 2024 at 1:28 am

Thanks for your comments and info, Momma05. Best, Nina

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Henry Ford's Hemp Cars

thealiennextdoor
October 3, 2020

