

Environmental and Economic Benefits of Hemp

Hemp is the same plant as marijuana, its scientific name is "cannabis sativa." For thousands of years hemp was used to make dozens of commercial products like paper, rope, canvas, and textiles. In fact, the very name "canvas" comes from the Dutch word meaning cannabis, which is marijuana. That's correct, real canvas is made from marijuana!

Many years ago hemp/marijuana was unjustly banned. However, hemp has recently been rediscovered as a plant that has enormous environmental, economic, and commercial potential. What follows are some fascinating facts about hemp/marijuana - facts that will shock most people:

The potential of hemp for paper production is enormous. According to the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, one acre of hemp can produce 4 times more paper than one acre of trees! All types of paper products can be produced from hemp: newsprint, computer paper, stationary, cardboard, envelopes, toilet paper, even tampons.

FACT: THERE IS NO TREE OR PLANT SPECIES ON EARTH CAPABLE OF PRODUCING AS MUCH PAPER PER ACRE AS HEMP! HEMP IS NUMBER ONE!

Paper production from hemp would eliminate the need to chop down BILLIONS of trees! MILLIONS of acres of forests and huge areas of wildlife habitat could be preserved.

Trees must grow for 20 to 50 years after planting before they can be harvested for commercial use. Within 4 months after it is planted, hemp grows 10 to 20 feet tall and it is ready for harvesting! Hemp can be grown on most farmland throughout the U.S., where forests require large tracts of land available in few locations. Substituting hemp for trees would save forests and wildlife habitats and would eliminate erosion of topsoil due to logging. Reduction of topsoil erosion would also reduce pollution of lakes/rivers/streams.

Fewer caustic and toxic chemicals are used to make paper from hemp than are used to make paper from trees - LESS POLLUTION!

Hemp can also be substituted for cotton to make textiles. Hemp fiber is 10 times stronger than cotton and can be used to make all types of clothing. Cotton grows only in warm climates and requires enormous amounts of water. Hemp requires little water and grows in all 50 states! There are now many stores in the U.S. that sell hemp-derived products such as clothing, paper, cheese, soap, ice cream, cosmetics, and hemp oil. Demand for these products - not even in existence in 1992 - is growing rapidly.

Hemp naturally repels weed growth and hemp has few insect enemies. Few insect enemies and no weed problems means hemp requires NO HERBICIDES and FEW or NO PESTICIDES!

Cotton requires enormous pesticide use. 50% of all pesticides used in the U.S. are used on cotton. Substituting hemp for cotton would drastically reduce pesticide usage!

Hemp produces twice as much fiber per acre as cotton! An area of land only 25 miles by 25 miles square (the size of a typical U.S. county) planted with hemp can produce enough fiber in one year to make 100 MILLION pair of denim jeans! A wide variety of clothing made from 100% hemp (pants, denim jeans, jackets, shoes, dresses, shorts, hats) is now available.

Building materials that substitute for wood can be made from hemp. These wood-like building materials are stronger than wood and can be manufactured cheaper than wood from trees. Using these hemp- derived building materials would reduce building costs and save even more trees!

Hemp seeds are a source of nutritious high-protein oil that can be used for human and animal consumption. Hemp oil is NOT intoxicating. Extracting protein from hemp is less expensive than extracting protein from soybeans. Hemp protein can be processed and flavored in any way soybean protein can. Hemp oil can also be used to make highly nutritious tofu, butter, cheese, salad oils, and other foods. Hemp oil can also be used to produce paint, varnish, ink, lubricating oils, and plastic substitutes. Because 50% of the weight of a mature hemp plant is seeds, hemp could become a significant source for these products.

Most hemp-derived products are NONTOXIC, BIODEGRADABLE, and RENEWABLE!

Unlike virtually all hemp substitutes, growing hemp requires very little effort and very few resources. Most substitutes for hemp (sisal, kenaf, sugar cane) grow in limited geographical areas and none have the paper/fiber potential of hemp. Hemp can be grown in all 50 states!

Unlike many crops, hemp puts little strain on the soil and requires only moderate amounts of fertilizer. Less fertilizer use results in less runoff into waterways and groundwater; therefore, less water pollution.

Hemp produces more biomass than any plant that can be grown in the U.S. This biomass can be converted to fuel in the form of clean-burning alcohol, or no-sulphur man-made coal. Hemp has more potential as a clean and renewable energy source than any crop on earth! It is estimated that if hemp was widely grown in the U.S. for fuel/energy, it could supply 100% of all U.S. energy needs!

Marijuana has dozens of proven medicinal uses. Marijuana is more effective, less toxic, and less expensive than alternative synthetic medicines currently used. A recent poll revealed that over

50% of U.S. physicians would prescribe marijuana to their patients if it was legally available. People who suffer from arthritis, AIDS, rheumatism, leukemia, multiple sclerosis, cancer, glaucoma, and other ailments can benefit from marijuana as medicine. But because of our insane marijuana laws, people in need of this medicine are denied it. Marijuana is classified by the U.S. government as a dangerous drug with no medicinal value, a classification that is absolutely ludicrous! Marijuana is widely accepted by the medical community as having numerous proven medicinal uses - it is NOT a dangerous drug.

Hemp for rope, lubricating oil, shoe material, and other materials was in such short supply during World War II that the U.S. government temporarily re-legalized hemp so U.S. farmers could grow it for the war effort. Hemp helped us win World War II! Hemp was a common crop that was grown legally in the U.S. for commercial use until 1937.

Hemp was NOT banned because it was a harmful drug. Hemp was banned because it was a competitive threat to the wood products industry and newly developed synthetic fibers that were patentable, and therefore more profitable than hemp. Corporations that profited from the demise of hemp propagated a smear campaign against hemp by claiming that marijuana use was a major drug problem (it was not) and that marijuana use caused people to become extremely violent - another falsehood. Unfortunately, these false claims went unchallenged and Congress outlawed hemp in 1937. Unfortunately, millions of Americans still believe the lies spread about marijuana/hemp.

On the eve of marijuana prohibition in the U.S., two articles about hemp appeared in major U.S. magazines. They were:

"The Most Profitable and Desirable Crop That Can Be Grown" From: Mechanical Engineering, February 26, 1937

"New Billion Dollar Crop" From: Popular Mechanics, February 1938

These articles reveal that hemp was on the verge of becoming a super crop because of new hemp processing technologies that were recently developed. Unfortunately, the potential of hemp was never reaped because of marijuana prohibition.

Hemp is legally grown for commercial use throughout much of Europe, India, China, Russia, Ukraine. In 1994 the Canadian government approved one experimental hemp field - its first legal hemp crop in 40 years. In 1995, there will be 11 government-approved hemp fields in Canada! If the U.S. does not legalize hemp for commercial use, a significant economic and environmental opportunity will be lost; the benefits will be reaped only by our economic competitors.

Literally millions of wild hemp plants grow throughout the entire Midwest today. Wild hemp, like hemp grown for commercial use, is USELESS as an intoxicant. It makes no sense to ban growing a plant that has enormous economic and environmental potential, grows naturally by the millions, and is impossible to exterminate. But yet, our draconian drug laws state that one acre of hemp grown on a person's property can result in the owner being sentenced to DEATH! That's correct, the DEATH PENALTY exists for growing one acre of nonintoxicating weeds!

U.S. Presidents and founding fathers George Washington and Thomas Jefferson grew hemp, used hemp products, and were hemp advocates. Today's political leaders--as well as the public that favors marijuana prohibition--would treat George Washington and Thomas Jefferson with disdain, brand them criminals, and throw them in prison!

FACT: NO TREE OR PLANT SPECIES ON EARTH HAS THE COMMERCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL POTENTIAL OF HEMP. OVER 30,000 KNOWN PRODUCTS CAN BE PRODUCED FROM HEMP!

"Make the most of the hemp seed, sow it everywhere." - George Washington, first president of the U.S. and hemp advocate.

This document is in the public domain. Please copy and distribute.