

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick

Q. Dear Twig: You talked about electric cars. What other ways can you run a car?

A. Well, you can push it yourself. Ha ha ha! Kidding. ["Not funny": Twig's niece Elderberria.] OK, here are some of the other ways:

Biodiesel: Liquid fuel made from vegetable oils and animal fats. Renewable.

Ethanol: Liquid fuel made from starch crops such as corn. Renewable.

Natural gas: Either compressed (as a gas) or liquified (into a liquid). Non-renewable. Pollutes less than gasoline.

Hydrogen fuel cell: Hydrogen goes in the fuel tank, which fuels the fuel cell, which makes electricity, which runs the car. Only "exhaust"? Water. Earth has lots of hydrogen.

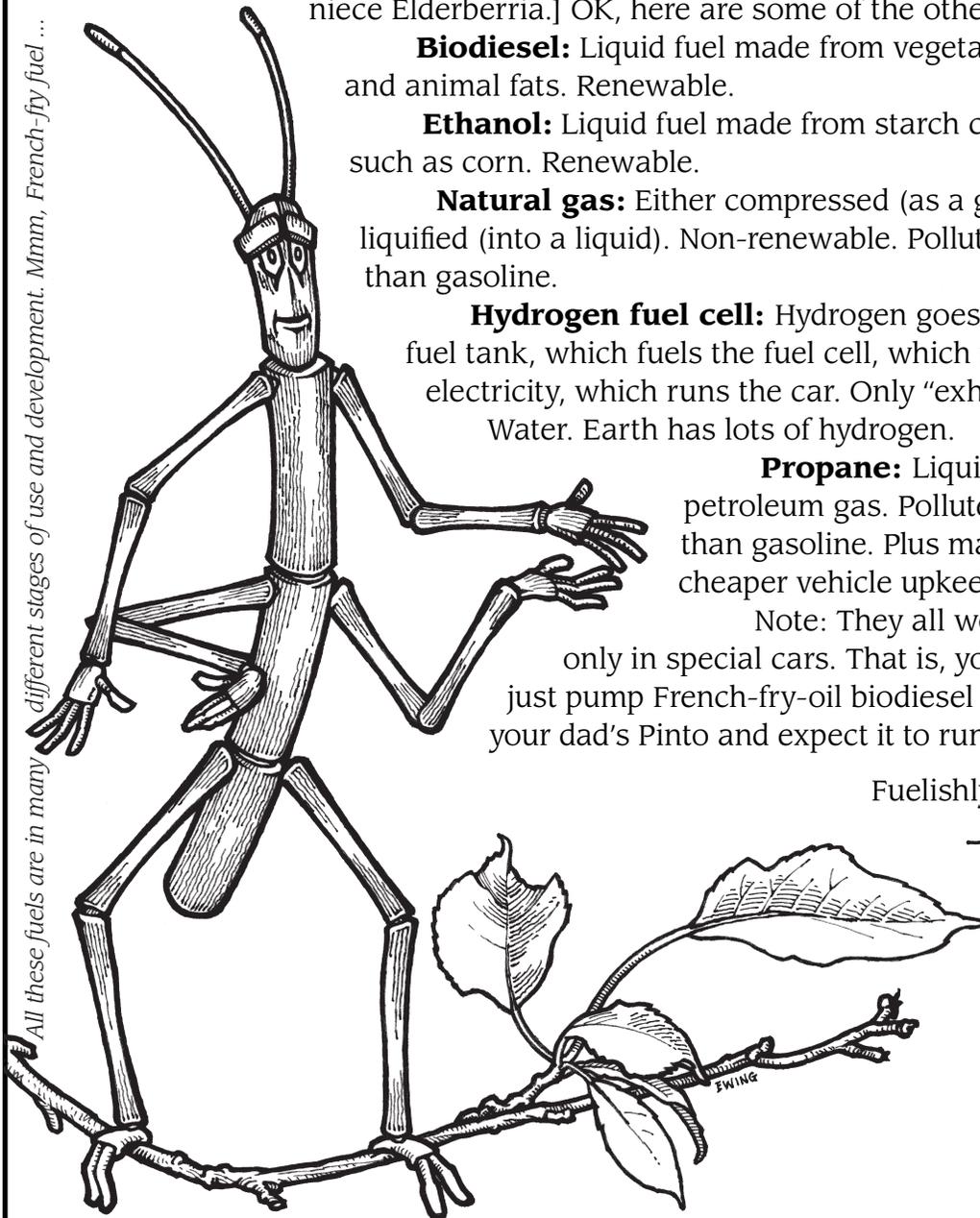
Propane: Liquified petroleum gas. Pollutes less than gasoline. Plus makes for cheaper vehicle upkeep.

Note: They all work only in special cars. That is, you can't just pump French-fry-oil biodiesel into your dad's Pinto and expect it to run. Urps!

Fuelishly,

Twig

All these fuels are in many different stages of use and development. Mmm, French-fry fuel ...



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (www.oardc.ohio-state.edu) and OSU Extension (extension.osu.edu).

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Notes: Check out, for starters, the Web site of the U.S. Department of Energy's Alternative Fuels and Advanced Vehicles Data Center, <http://www.eere.energy.gov/afdc/vehicles/electric.html>. Other alternative vehicle fuels include solar energy, <http://engineering.osu.edu/studentprojects/solar.php>; compressed air (<http://freeenergynews.com/Directory/CompressedAir/index.html>), and hay/oats fuel cell (<http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/kt3v19q1fn/>).

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