

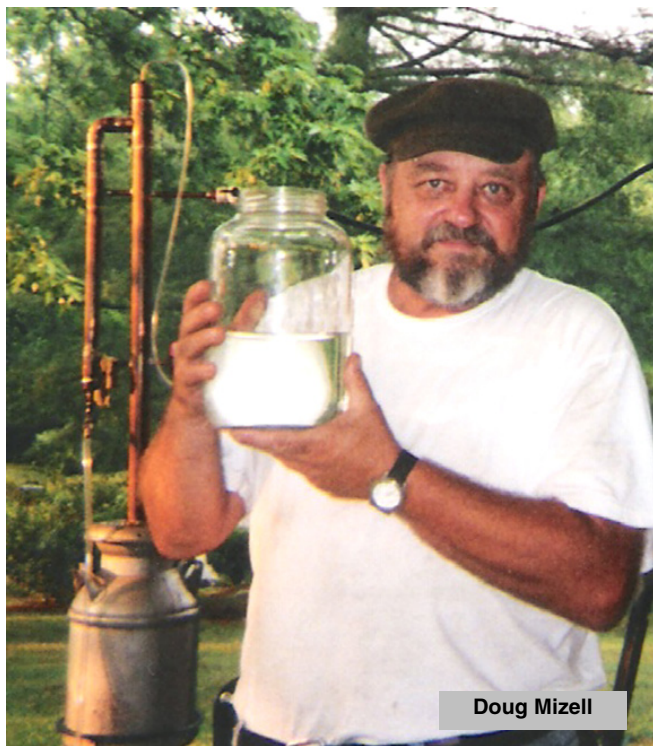


by Alexandra Edwards

One of Spring's greatest pleasures is seeing the first tinge of green turn into an abundance of fresh green leaves, flowers and shrubs as they cover the beautiful landscapes of East Tennessee. One plant not quite so welcome though in this area is Kudzu. Originally a native to Japan and China, the fast growing vine Kudzu was introduced into the United States as a greenery alternative along the banks of interstate highways. However, it was not realized at the time just how quickly the seed of the vine would spread and it was not long before kudzu blanketed the landscapes of many southern towns. The vine, now considered a pest, grows wild, smothering trees and other vegetation as well as any fixed object that happens to get in its way.

While environmentalists have been struggling to find a way to eliminate kudzu, there are some that because of its special qualities, are trying to make good use of the plant.

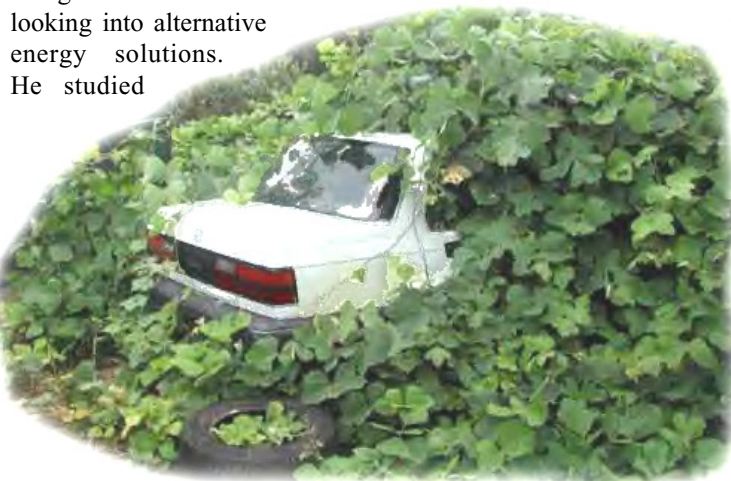
Doug Mizell, of Cleveland, Tennessee has been studying kudzu as a feedstock for making fuel grade ethanol as an alternative fuel. Right now, with the rapidly rising cost of gaso-



Doug Mizell

line at the pumps, finding an alternative fuel could be the perfect solution.

After the energy crisis of the nineties, Mizell felt the need to do something about rising fuel costs and started looking into alternative energy solutions. He studied



solar, wind and water power but decided to research ethanol after reading an arti-

cle on it which explained it could be made from renewable grain crops, which could possibly free us from dependence on foreign oil. A search on the Internet

showed ethanol fuel was being distilled from corn, soybean, potatoes, sugar

Kudzu - If You Can't Lose It - Use It

cane and rice. However, Mizell felt these crops could be another supply and demand issue which could drive up the price of the ethanol, defeating the object of an alternative fuel.

Mizell first learned about kudzu back in 2000 during his plight to clear it from his vacation property at Lake Enid, Mississippi. Fascinated by the weed's phenomenal growth, he did some research which showed kudzu had high concentrations of sugar and starch, key components of feedstock used for making fuel grade ethanol. Remembering this, led to a further study to see if kudzu would be commercially viable. Research showed that Kudzu grows up to a foot a day or sixty feet a season and covers 7.2 million acres of southern countryside. The conclusion: with all facts assimilated, Mizell concluded; "Refining a fuel from Kudzu was not only possible but very practical. It would not compete with food grains for feedstock, and a bi-product of kudzu fuel will yield a high protein poultry or livestock feed.

Mizell's next step was to involve some capitol investment. His plans were to form a team of civic and financial leaders in East Tennessee to jumpstart interest in building an alternative fuels refinery here to produce ethanol and bio-diesel.

Mizell said. "It would be an economic boon to the region and another step to the energy independence of the nation. Alternative fuels will be as big as the computer industry's explosive expansion in the 80s and 90s. I want East Tennessee to be the center of that storm of technology."

Last Spring Mizell's dreams became a reality when he teamed up with partner Tom Monahan to form Agro Gas Industries to produce "Bio-Fuels" (bio-diesel and ethanol) that can

compete favorably with fossil fuels (petroleum). "KudZunol" derived from the fuel grade ethanol from Kudzu is the marketing name for the gasoline alternative. Agro Gas recently acquired property in Cleveland for a Mechanical Research Center and in Old Fort for a Fuel Development Center. Their intentions are to build the first of several micro-refineries producing ethanol and bio diesel in east Tennessee. The past two years have been spent perfecting the harvesting, fermentation and refining processes of KudZunol. A limited production run of the ethanol is already running many test engines and a "Test Vehicle" will soon be seen on the



streets of Cleveland and Bradley County.

In January, Agro Gas Industries cofounders Mizell and Monahan were invited by State Senator Dewayne Bunch to speak before the Tennessee Executive Committee for Environmental Studies and later with Executive committee of Tennessee legislators in Nashville.

"The American consumer must come to understand that every drop of green gas produced and used is a bullet in the heart of Middle Eastern economic terrorism. They must also understand that unlike foreign oil, the more they use it, the cheaper and more available it will become." Mizell said.

Kudzu is an undesirable weed which over the years has proved to be impossible to eradicate. Therefore it makes sense that if we can't

lose it, we may as well use it. For more information go to KudZunol.com or call Doug Mizell at (423) 716-4357

Enterprising folk in the South have even managed to find culinary uses for kudzu which include a recipe for Kudzu Blossom Jelly, made with 4 cups of kudzu blossoms, 4 cups boiling water, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, 1 3/4 ounce package powdered pectin and 5 cups sugar.

It can be served spooned over cream cheese, or melted and served over waffles and ice cream.

An alternative to cabbage is rolled kudzu leaves stuffed with diced tomatoes, seasoned with garlic and salt and the juice of 3 lemons.

For these and more kudzu recipes Google kudzu jelly or go to

<http://home.att.net/~ejlinton/jelly.html>.

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