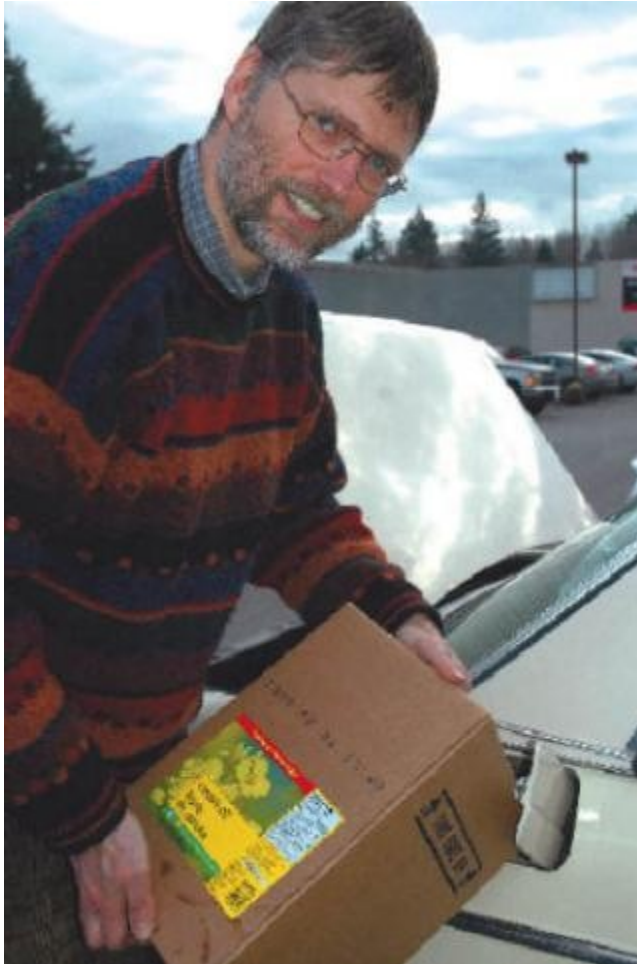


A diesel veggie tale begins

By Peter Rusland - Cowichan News Leader and Pictorial - February 23, 2008

Peter Rusland



Diesel vehicle conversion mechanic Bjorn Ratjen dumps canola oil into his 1984 Mercedes Benz that now runs on pure and waste vegetable oil, biodiesel and regular diesel fuel with the flip of a switch.

Dr. Bjorn Ratjen proudly lifts the hood on one of the Cowichan's first diesel cars running on pure or waste vegetable oil, biodiesel or diesel fuel at the flip of a switch.

The 1984 Turbodiesel Mercedes Benz joined various vehicles Ratjen has converted to run on carbon-neutral vegetable oil rather than oil-based diesel.

"Anything that runs on diesel can be converted," he said of the two-tank systems costing up to \$2,000 using gear from Salmon Arm's Plantdrive.

Ratjen will display an electronically converted 2004 VW diesel Jetta at next weekend's Green Living Show in Vancouver's B.C. Place.

"We'll be competing with the big guys because other transportation and auto companies will be there."

His Mercedes will also showcase his conversions while being driven around B.C. to promote the Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival.

Ratjen works in association with the Cowichan Biodiesel Cooperative collecting waste vegetable oil from local restaurants and giving a portion of that filtered oil to folks wanting to run vehicles on straight vegetable oil.

Waste and pure vegetable oil are preheated and further filtered onboard his converted cars.

Ratjen was part of the first American EPA standards tests showing emissions are lower using plant oil compared to diesel fuel in the same car.

"The environmental load is less from the exhaust alone and the fuel can be grown in a year's timeframe rather waiting millions years until it's ready again," said the owner of Dr. Bjorn's Auto in Cobble Hill.

Call 743-7575 or drbjornsauto@shaw.ca.