

Although making alcohol has been termed humankind's second-oldest profession, that doesn't mean everyone knows how to do it. While it's relatively simple to make alcohol, the devil is in the details. I've tried to walk a line between making sure you understand everything that's important for producing alcohol on the small scale, and being too obsessive with trivia and minutiae.

I've also resisted the temptation to outline only one way of doing things. Instead, I've tried to give you the principles and tools to design a plant that fits your site and goals. I think this is a far better approach than to give you every nut and bolt of a single specific plant design. It permits you to bring creativity and ingenuity into the process so that the plant you build will truly be your own.

In this section, you will learn about many different feedstocks and waste products that can be made into alcohol. My goal is to

give you an overview of not only traditional crops but, more importantly, unusual crops that are often considered to be weeds.

Much land that isn't considered agriculturally valuable can be used for growing. Usually, humans have damaged or swamped those soils or turned them into deserts.

Some of the crops I discuss could be used as part of an ecological restoration of the soil, as we routinely do in the field of permaculture. Alcohol fuel production can be a vehicle to repair land, while simultaneously providing relief to our overstressed, yet still productive soils.

You should come away from the discussion of energy crops with hope and the certainty that we can design our way to an organic agriculture that provides both food and energy while improving the soil every year.