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Lexus Expands Use of Eco Plastic

Graduating to a better environmental solution.

In the opening scene of the classic 1967 movie *The Graduate*, Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman) receives unsolicited career advice from a family friend, Mr. McGuire, who simply says, "Plastics. There's a great future in plastics." If there's a remake in the works (and there may be), Mr. McGuire might instead say, "Eco plastics."

If he were to be driving a 2010 Lexus HS 250h hybrid, he could give the young grad a demonstration. We'll never know if Benjamin Braddock went onto a career in plastics, but for the environment's sake, we can be grateful that some graduates went into the field of environmentally-friendly plastic alternatives. This fall, the results of their work, plant-based "ecological plastic" ("eco plastic" for short) will make up 30 percent of the trunk area and other interior parts in the all-new HS 250h hybrid sedan.



The new HS 250h will be the first Lexus to use "ecological plastic" for specific interior parts. It is also the first vehicle in the world to use eco plastic in the trunk area covering.

Plastics made from petroleum products can take hundreds or even thousands of years to decompose in landfills. Since they've only been around for a bit

over 50 years, that is just an estimate based on laboratory experiments. Eco plastic offers a way to reduce the environmental impact of recycling a car at the end of its useful life.

In addition to being highly recyclable, eco plastic emits 20 percent less carbon dioxide (CO₂) compared to conventional petroleum-based plastic over its estimated lifespan. At the same time, of course, ecological plastic also reduces the amount of petroleum needed to create parts for cars.

Eco plastic is also known as "bio-plastic" because it is derived from plants including kenaf. Through the process of photosynthesis, plants grow by consuming water and carbon dioxide. After cultivation and processing, plant materials are broken down and used to create eco plastic parts. In an automobile, these parts are as durable as conventional plastic, and the owner will not notice any functional difference.

Kenaf is one of the plant resources used to make eco plastic for the Lexus HS 250h. It grows rapidly, can be cultivated annually and contains plenty of useful cellulose fibers. Most importantly, kenaf can absorb a large amount of CO₂, offsetting the CO₂ released

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when the plastic parts made from it are eventually recycled.

Lexus has achieved many "firsts" in its history, introducing technologies and features that others have adopted as well. Is being first important? It is, inasmuch as it triggers others to follow when important technology is introduced. The 2010 Lexus HS 250h hybrid sedan will likewise issue a challenge for others to follow – one that can benefit even those who do not own one.

Lexus is well on the way to expanding the use of eco plastic in its vehicles. As for movie remakes – that's recycling, Hollywood-style.

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