

UNplugged WITH

HEMPORIUM

Tony Budden tried the corporate thing but it didn't work. Now he builds houses made of hemp.

PROFILE

FULL NAME: Tony Budden

WHERE I STAY: Noordhoek, Cape Town

WHAT I DO: I'm a partner in Hemporium, where we work to change perceptions about industrial hemp, as well as create an environmentally conscious consumer culture.

OTHER STUFF We are involved in sponsoring musicians and the Rocking The Daisies festival. I'm also the spokesperson for Hemp Now, a petition for government to change the laws regarding hemp.

HEMP 101 Hemp refers to the industrial uses of the cannabis plant – believed to be the first cultivated by man for fibre. It's only been outlawed in the last 100 years, ostensibly because of its threat to the cotton and paper industries in the USA. Things have changed over the last 15 years. Now more than 30 countries like the UK, France, Canada and China are growing industrial hemp again. We're working hard to include South Africa on this list.

ARE YOU AN INNOVATOR?

Our tagline at Hemporium is 'Innovate. Educate. Cultivate.' We have been innovating through the development of hemp since our launch in 1996. My strength lies in exploring and breaking new ground for others to join and co-operate in building a sustainable future for our planet.

WHY HEMP?

It's versatile and ecofriendly, and can be used to provide the raw materials for textiles, nutrition, construction, fuel, oils, cosmetics, paper and more, at very little cost to the environment. It grows very quickly (up to 4m tall in four months) and absorbs a lot of CO₂ while growing.

THE PUBLIC'S REACTION?

We need to separate the industrial uses from the medicinal and recreational uses

of cannabis. Decades of indoctrination led people to believe that cannabis is the 'devil's weed' and has no valid use. Once we have shown our products and samples to someone so they can touch and feel them, they start understanding their value. We focus strictly on hemp for houses, jobs and food.



DID YOU BUILD A HEMP HOUSE?

My partner in Hemporium, Duncan Parker, and I saw how people's interest

was piqued by the hemp brick and a sample piece of insulation we had. But we had nothing bigger than that to show, so we decided to take it to the next level and build a house. It's another part of our 'show and tell' campaign. It's been a four-or-five-year project involving a lot of research and development, and culminated in me being invited to present at the International Hemp Building Symposium in Ireland, where we secured the supply of the materials needed.

We recently completed the house – built in a modular fashion – with Erwin van der Weerd from Perfect Places. It's built with a wood frame and features hempcrete, hemp particle board, hemp insulation as well as hemp couches, carpets, curtains, bed linen, cupboards, lamp shades and more, and is a showcase for what hemp can offer the construction industry. Around 50% of the house was grown in five months. There is no other resource I know of that can match that.

IS IT EXPENSIVE?

Currently it is a little more expensive than a bricks-and-mortar building because we have to import the materials. Once we are growing it here it will be much more affordable, and could be grown and processed where the houses are needed. A hemp house is much better insulated than one made of bricks and cement, and needs a fraction of the energy to heat and cool. So it's obviously better for the environment.

FAST HEMP-HOUSE FACTS

- It took six months to build.
- The house will last forever. The carbon in the hemp bonds with calcium in the lime to form calcium carbonate over time, turning into limestone. There is a 300-year-old hemp house in Japan.
- We also used magnesium-oxide board, wood, double-glazed windows, recycled Cannata stone counter tops, cork and reclaimed wood.
- A few bricks were used in the strip foundation.
- We had six workers on site, and the same number in the factory, where the panels were produced.

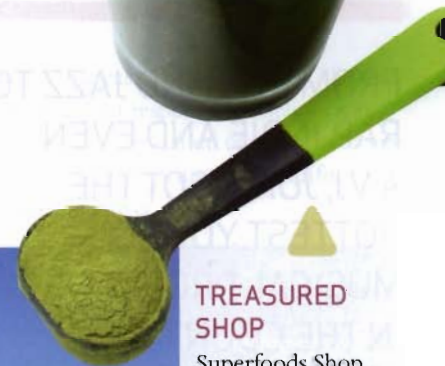
FAVOURITE SALAD

The 'When-we' salad at the Green Room in Kommetjie. It has roasted butternut, chickpeas, sunflower seeds, baby spinach, goats cheese and a balsamic reduction. Perfect for the post-surf refuel.



INDULGING MY SWEET TOOTH

Sugar is my big temptation, but lately I have discovered raw chocolates and love being able to indulge guilt-free. Look out for Gayleen's Decadence in most health stores.



ON A PERSONAL NOTE

FAVOURITE GETAWAY

Plettenberg Bay, or Eland's Bay up the West Coast.



TREASURED SHOP

Superfoods Shop in Westlake, Cape Town, where I stock up on raw cacao, hemp protein powder and all the other tools that make it easy for me to eat a healthy, nutritious diet.