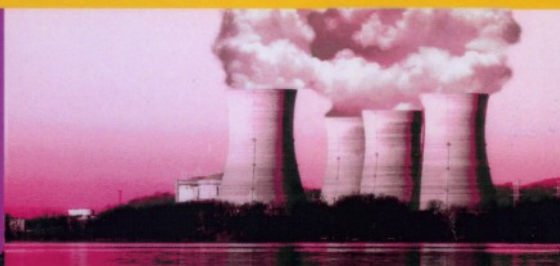




DARRYL MCMAHON



*The Emperor's New
Hydrogen Economy*



as lawn mowers, or larger devices as required. With a little effort, you can kick the gas-can habit.



Author blowing snow with his electric tractor

Hybrids

When shopping, consider buying a hybrid, if it is available in the type of vehicle you need. These are a new option from some automakers that use a small electric drive system to help reduce fuel consumption, especially for stop-and-go urban driving. Their gas mileage can be phenomenal, due to the efficient design of the overall vehicle combined with the gains from the hybrid drive-train technology. The Honda Insight is rated at 3 L/100 km or about 70 miles per U.S. gallon. I have friends that have reported getting 90 miles per U.S. gallon with careful driving in the Insight. The first generation Toyota Prius seats 4 adults, and boasts a fuel consumption of just 4 L/100 km (52 miles per U.S. gallon) in *city* driving. I have driven one of these, and can confirm these figures from personal experience. The second-generation Prius is a five-seater.

Note, the Toyota Prius hybrid has enough battery capacity so that it does not require a battery warmer or block heater to ensure starts on cold days. It also provides instant heat courtesy of ceramic electric heaters, so it does not need to wait for the engine to warm up to provide heat for defrosting or warming the cabin.

At least 23 models of hybrid vehicles will be on the North American market by the 2007 model year, based on manufacturer announcements. Unfortunately, many will be very mild hybrids and others will focus on performance (accelera-



Electric tractor and tiller in the author's garden

For those vegetables that simply defeat us (in my yard, it's cucumbers), the local farmer's market is a good option.

Buy Locally

There's a reason humans established currency. Some of us have a natural advantage in doing certain things (e.g., growing cucumbers) relative to others (e.g., me). So, let's benefit from these differing talents and exchange our personal bounties for our mutual benefit. Most areas have small markets where local producers exchange their harvest for mere money. Even if it doesn't come from my yard, a local cucumber is better than no cucumber at all.

Buy In Season

However, just because a fruit or vegetable is available at the supermarket or the farmers' market, doesn't mean it really belongs there in terms of nature's cycles.

If you just have to have fresh strawberries in February, despite the snow on the ground outside, well, the market is there to serve you. Just be aware the amount of energy spent to deliver that berry to your table dwarfs the food energy value it represents.