

A green way to make things

## Making buildings, cars and planes from materials based on plant fibres

*Materials scientists find new ways to use natural fibres*

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USING carrots to create concrete, turning wood into plastic, or even compressing it into a “super wood” that is as light and strong as titanium might sound like a series of almost Frankensteinish experiments. Yet all three are among the latest examples of employing natural fibres from plants as eco-friendly additives or alternatives to man-made materials.

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The group is still exploring exactly how strong it can make concrete by adding platelets, but initial studies suggest that the impact could be considerable. Just 500 grams of platelets can reduce the amount of cement needed to make a cubic metre of concrete by about 40kg—a saving of 10%. Dr Saafi and his team