

Jojoba oil shows promise

Editor's note: This is the second of a three-part series.
 Until the late 60s, the oil of an endangered whale species was used to make automatic transmission fluid and other lubricants.
 Concern about the mass whaling harvest, especially by foreign commercial fishermen, resulted in congressional legislation. It banned the killing of sperm whales in American waters and the importation of sperm whale oil.
 As a result of the 1971 ban, industries have been pressed to manufacture a synthetic substitute capable of providing continuous lubrication.
 Scientists know of a substitute, in fact, an oil producing plant, said Dr. Charles Miller, plant researcher at Texas A&M University. The only problem is producing the plant in significant quantities.
 The plant is called jojoba (ho-ho-ba). It grows wild in the desert Southwest and produces an oil al-

most identical to the oil of the sperm whale, Miller said.
 "Jojoba shows great promise, if we can get the information needed to make it a high production crop. Right now it's a big gamble. It takes too long to grow."
 "The oil of the jojoba is extracted from the seed by crushing it in equipment similar to that used in cotton seed oil extraction," Miller said. "Jojoba oil is very pure and requires almost no refining."
 One of Texas' first experimental field research projects with jojoba will begin this spring at Texas A&M University. A small field plot and greenhouse experiment are planned.
 Production of jojoba may require an operation similar to citrus farm-

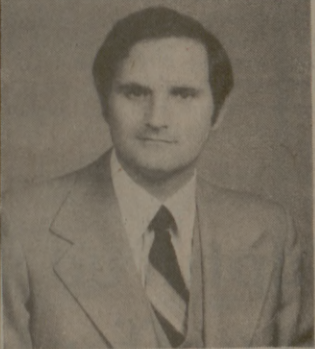
ing, Dr. Dan Bragg, another Texas A&M scientist, said.
 "As much as 60 percent of its weight is a light yellow, odorless liquid wax or oil," he said.
 A major advantage in growing jojoba is it requires almost no water. In areas of low rainfall (5-6 inches) and low soil fertility, jojoba can reach 4 feet in height. With rainfall of 16 inches and medium soil fertility, plants have exceeded 10 feet.
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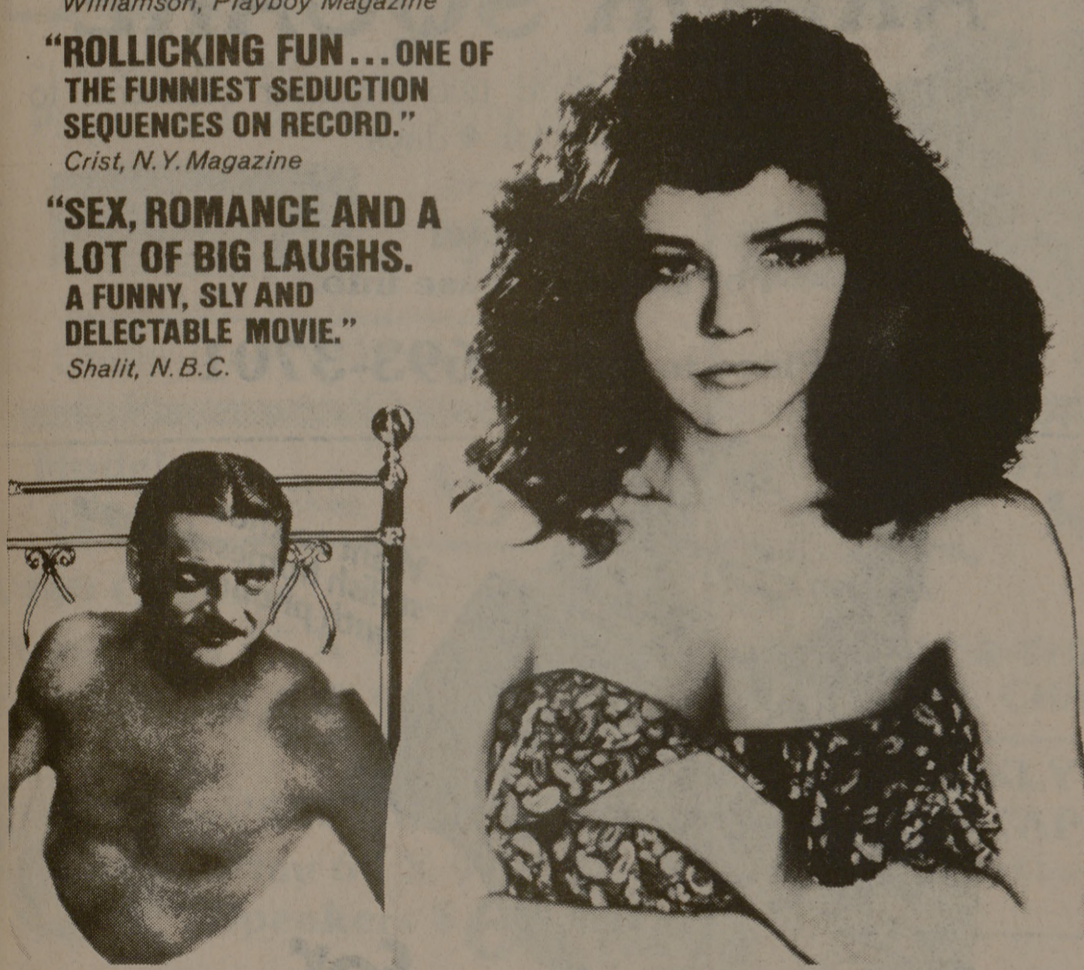
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