

Embracing the potential and facing the fears of radical advances in genetic engineering

Companies like Synthorx, [DNA 2.0](#) and Cambrian are capitalising on last year's development of [synthetic DNA](#). Scientists for the first time created living DNA that contained a pair of bases not found in nature. This takes genetic engineering to a new level, beyond merely manipulating or splicing existing DNA.

The potential – besides [glow-in-the-dark plants](#) and [dog poo that smells like bananas](#) – is tremendous. There are applications to many of the major challenges facing humanity today.

Oxitec, a company specialising in genetically modifying insects, is working to eradicate pests without requiring harmful chemicals. Some of its products are already being tested, and they also hope that the same technique will work against mosquitoes. The mosquito is, after all, more than a mere annoyance. It is the [deadliest creature on earth](#), and the only animal that [kills more people than people do](#).

We all know the benefits of genetic engineering in crops. The [Golden Rice](#) project proposes to [improve health in poor countries](#). Some [environmentalists oppose this](#), of course, causing much [human death and misery](#).

We have long had the power to deal death. Humanity has spent thousands of years learning how to cope with that [awesome](#) power. Civilisation has thrived despite its bloody history. We are better than our worst actions. Now that we are beginning to master how to create, adapt and preserve life, only a fearful conservative would stand athwart history, yelling Stop.

Come to think of it, is creating, adapting and preserving life not what we've been doing all along?

Read full, original article: [Design your own genetically modified freak show](#)