From cell phone to sunflower
Scientists make phone cover that turns into flower
CNN
AMSTERDAM, Netherlands (Reuters)

Scientists said on Monday they have come up with a cell phone cover that will grow into a sunflower when thrown away. Materials company Pvaaxx Research & Development, at the request of U.S.-based mobile phone maker Motorola (MOT.N), has come up with a polymer that looks like any other plastic, but which degrades into soil when discarded. Researchers at the University of Warwick in Britain then helped to develop a phone cover that contains a sunflower seed, which will feed on the nitrates that are formed when the polyvinylalcohol polymer cover turns to waste. "It's a totally biodegradable and non-toxic plastic," said Pvaaxx spokesman Peter Morris. "This is the first product that we've made public. We're working with blue chip companies and will introduce several products next year," he said, adding it would be used in electronics, horticulture, ammunition and household cleaning. The company's new plastic, which was created over the past five years but was in development for longer, can be rigid or flexible in shape. Some 650 million mobile phones will be sold this year, and most of them will be thrown away within two years, burdening the environment with plastics, heavy metals and chemicals. A biodegradable cover can offer some relief for nature, Warwick University said. Motorola said it had not yet decided if it would introduce a model built with the new plastic, and that it would take until at least the second quarter of 2005 to get a commercial product. "(To improve) the quality (of the plastic) is something we're working on," said Motorola project manager Peter Shead, adding the new plastic may be used in snap-on covers first. Many young consumers buy cheap and interchangeable plastic covers to personalize their standard phone.

Copyright 2004 Reuters <http://www.cnn.com/interactive_legal.html>. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.