

Plastic Bags

Why we care

It may not seem like a simple plastic bag could be a threat to the environment, but the bags add up. The average household uses 1,500 plastic shopping bags each year. Even though Portland has banned them at checkout, the bags are still used for produce, bulk foods, and prepackaged items.

Consider the impact: Plastic bags require petroleum as a raw material, and the manufacturing process emits toxic waste into the air and water. Once discarded, the bags either sit in a landfill for up to 1,000 years or create a litter problem because they are so lightweight and hard to contain. They don't biodegrade in the environment, but break into smaller and smaller pieces. In the North Pacific, oceanographers have located enormous patches of floating plastic debris. Tens of thousands of turtles, whales, dolphins, seals, and birds die every year when the plastic fragments are ingested. The plastic gets trapped in the gut, preventing food from being digested.

Simple, positive change

1. Purchase the type of durable, reusable bags you prefer: canvas, woven plastic, nylon ([ChicoBags](#)), or string. www.reusablebags.com
2. Place the empty bags where you will always have them—in the car, on a hook by the door, in a purse, briefcase, or backpack.
3. Keep small reusable bags in your shopping bag for purchasing produce and dry goods in bulk.
4. Use your shopping bag, not only for groceries, but for any item you purchase.
5. Rinse and dry Ziploc, produce, and bread bags for reuse.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.