

Plastic Bags

Why we care

It may not seem like a simple plastic shopping bag could be a threat to the environment, but with the average household using 900 bags every year the cumulative impact becomes enormous. For starters, plastic bags require petroleum as a raw material, and the manufacturing process emits toxic waste into the air and water. Once discarded, plastic bags either sit in a landfill for 1,000 years or create a litter problem because they are so lightweight and hard to contain. Finally, they don't biodegrade in the environment, but break into smaller and smaller pieces. In the North Pacific, oceanographers have located a 3.5-million-ton floating mass of plastic debris. Tens of thousands of turtles, whales, dolphins, seals, and birds die every year due to plastic bags as they often mistake the plastic debris for food, such as jellyfish. When eaten, 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:
 - Woven plastic bags - large grocery stores
 - Canvas or nylon bags – www.reusablebags.com
 - Net bags – your local natural food store
2. Develop a routine. 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. Rinse and dry produce and bread bags for reuse.
4. Keep reusable bags in your shopping bag for purchasing produce and dry goods in bulk.

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