

Tip Sheet: Eliminate Single-Use Plastic Bags

Americans throw away almost 100 billion single-use plastic bags a year. The average bag is used about 12 minutes. Once discarded, they obstruct storm drains and sewage, then move on to ensnare and kill marine mammals, an estimated 100,000 of them, and then break down into toxic microplastics that can last in our landfills and oceans for 1000 years.

Communities around the world are taxing, banning, or limiting the use of single-use plastic bags while encouraging customers to bring their own reusable bags. More than 200 municipalities have banned plastic bags or charge a fee, and two states have a statewide ban. Plastic bags are banned in 32 countries. 18 other countries tax their usage. (Source: <https://www.reusethisbag.com/articles/where-are-plastic-bags-banned-around-the-world> 2/9/2021)

Action of the Month: Eliminate using single-use plastic bags for shopping. Replace with reusable bags that you bring with you.

Tips for avoiding single-use plastic shopping bags:

- Collect a group of reusable bags to take shopping.
- Store some reusable bags in your car so that they are always ready to use for any store.
- If you do not have your bags with you, ask the grocery if it can
 - provide “boomerang bags” that you can borrow and return next time
 - reuse any cardboard boxes from shipped in products to pack your purchase
 - use paper bags instead of single-use plastic bags so you can recycle them
- If you have children who shop with you, ask them to remind you to bring along the bags.
- If you purchase one or two items you can easily carry to your car, skip the bag.

Advanced Actions: Eliminate other single-use plastics like individual bottled waters, plastic straws, and plastic food utensils. Replace them with reusable non-plastic alternatives.

Tips to eliminate usage of other single-use plastics:

- Use a reusable water bottle that you can refill at home or away.
- Skip the plastic straw.
- Consider bulk buying. Check with your store. You may be able to bring a container to fill with your purchases of grains, nuts, seeds, beans, rice, etc. And for products you purchase regularly, can you choose larger sizes to reduce the number of containers trashed?
- When deciding what product to purchase, consider packaging. Is there an option that uses less plastic in its packaging, a different material that is recyclable or at least decomposes, or one already packaged in recycled material?

Adapted with permission from materials produced by Earth Care for Hoosier-IPL www.EarthCareIndiana.org

