

Trying to live without plastic

Why? I saw the 2009 film "Plastic Planet" from Director Werner Boote and understood that by now we might all have plastic in our blood.

Plastic Planet by Werner Boote / <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghkgCyCPOk0>

The press has recently focused on this subject too:

1. G2 Feature article "From sea to plate How plastics got into our fish" Susan Smillie 15-02-17
2. "Plastic pellets found on 73% of British beaches" Press Association 17-02-17
3. "Toxic chemicals at "sky high" levels in Mariana trench" Damian Carrington 14-02-17
4. How your clothes are poisoning our oceans and food supply  
(<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jun/20/microfibers-plastic-pollution-oceans-patagonia-synthetic-clothes-microbeads>)

So we had a chat about it at TH Green Drinks... before I start, for the record:

I am not a chemical engineer, trained at plastic recycling, or similar. I only share some of my experiences. Feel free to do your own research, question my thoughts, or add alternatives. I don't endorse products, just share what we do.

Trying to get rid of plastic is difficult, it is so bl\*\*\*y practical and no-plastic choices are few.

Remember, whatever you do is progress and helps the environment! Tackle single use non-recycle plastic as a priority, if you can, such as paper coffee cups, and certain produce bags like lettuce bags.

Reduce, Re-use, Recycle, Rot / repair

Reduce:

- Bring your own shopping bags. If you forget to bring it, some Supermarket let you use their cardboard boxes.
- Our local butcher is happy to put any food items in our glass containers. (Many no-plastic warriors use stainless steel containers, we use Ikea Pyrex style containers so I can see what's in my fridge. BTW I am still using my Grand mums Pyrex dish, fingers crossed my Ikea one last this long!
- We use Riverford for our veg delivery, their boxes are packed with vegetable in season and only the salad is wrapped in plastic, which is recyclable and they take it back for recycling. Able & Cole used too much plastic.
- We use Bamboo tooth brushes, not perfect but a great plastic reduction. They cost more so we use them a little longer and boil them for about 3 minutes every couple of months. Some people...
  - Soak your toothbrush in antibacterial mouthwash. ...
  - For everyday cleaning, you can store your toothbrush in a small cup of hydrogen peroxide. ..
- I wash with a soap bar and wash my hair with a shampoo bar (Lush & Simply Soap Hemp).
- We use cotton rags and cloths, not microfiber cloths, and soda, soap and vinegar for household cleaning.
- The Midhurst Health food shop does Ecover re-fills for dishwashing soap, hair shampoo, etc.
- I buy some of my food in bulk online, the supplier does 3KG bulk bags as paper bags.
- Bring your own cup or fluid bottle. I used to re-use plastic bottles, but over time they get grey. i.e. showing that the plastic has leached into the drink it contains, and your body... I use an old glass bottle, or a cup, since both my office and UCA college have water fountains.
- Many people don't know that paper coffee cups are very difficult to recycle! Check the following resources on the subject:
  - Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2016/jul/29/hughs-war-on-waste-fearnley-whittingstall-coffee-cup>
  - River Cottage: <https://www.rivercottage.net/news/wake-up-and-smell-the-waste>
  - BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06nzi5q>
  - BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/proginfo/2016/30/hughs-war-on-waste>

Re-use:

- We freeze in recycled glass jars, just leave one inch at the top for expansion.

Recycle:

We talked about various ways to recycle plastic.

Waverly actually seems to take all plastics and sorts them at a plant,; we live in East-Hampshire, they only take resin code 1 & 2, glass and cardboard. One of the problems with plastic recycling is that the recycling indicators are often hard to find, different suppliers use different indicators and/or some are not marked at all.



Widely recycled ??? How are you supposed to know that on the go?

This means you can recycle everything with this label in Hampshire, including: cans and tins, aerosols, plastic bottles, paper and card.

I could not find out what this means in Waverly... Perhaps somebody has this information?

Also, for example PET / PETE or 'triangle 1' are all Polyethylene terephthalate

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resin\\_identification\\_code](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resin_identification_code)

<http://documents.hants.gov.uk/waste/UnderstandingRecyclinglabels.pdf>

Particularly LDPE or PE-LD, or resin code 4, can be both recyclable and non- recyclable:



The recyclable style (not at Kerbside - can be recycled at special boxes are larger supermarkets (Haslemere – Waitrose) <https://www.recyclenow.com/what-to-do-with/plastic-film-0>

If they are not marked, you can try this little identification guide (source: [https://www.plasticsrecycling.org/images/pdf/FAQ/New\\_Film\\_FAQs.pdf](https://www.plasticsrecycling.org/images/pdf/FAQ/New_Film_FAQs.pdf))

Can I recycle it if...

- The plastic is coloured? **YES**. Coloured material is not a problem for recycling.
- It tears like paper? **NO**. This type of plastic is currently not accepted in bag recycling bins.
- It crinkles loudly like candy wrappers, or crisp bags when I mash it in my hand? **NO**. Please do not include, as it is not currently acceptable for recycling.
- It has labels or tape? **YES**, but labels, tape, and adhesive strips SHOULD BE REMOVED prior to putting it in the recycling bin. The integrity of the bag isn't important—the recycler just wants the clean plastic.
- It is thicker, stiff plastic like pet food bags or bedding bags (including anything with a zipper)? **NO**. These are not the same type of plastic as what recyclers want, so DO NOT include.

- It is silvery or metallic (like some snack packaging or printer ink cartridge packages)? **NO**.  
This material is not acceptable.
- If it says it's degradable or compostable AND recyclable? **NO**.  
Currently, these bags cannot be placed in drop-off bins. The recyclers reprocessing bags don't want the products they are making to degrade over time so these bags are not acceptable.
- It is dirty, has crumbs, or is wet? **NO**.  
Recyclers need the bags and film to be CLEAN and DRY. Please don't include dirty or wet bags, or any material that has food or other residues. **If in doubt, throw it**

Another confusing term used in plastic recycling is biodegradable vs compostable.

Please note that biodegradable plastic bags are not necessarily more environmentally friendly. Some have only salts added, so they decompose quicker, but they are not any less toxic. A good explanation I found is here:

<http://biobagusa.com/environment/compostable-and-biodegradable/>

In a nutshell, if it does not say 'compostable' or 'European Norm EN 13432' it is not eco friendly. Biodegradable cling film is a top culprit – just say no to Clingfilm please 😊 BTW I have a bees wax cloth that wraps dishes nicely...

Lastly we had a few Q&As:

- A simple one - are the top and the bottom of a milk container the same plastic i.e should one put the top back on or recycle separately?

It's fine to leave them on, they can be separated at the recycling plant.

- When supermarkets accept 'film' do they just mean their own bags/veg bags and what is this material recycled into?

Everything marked as 'film - recycle at participating stores, not at kerbside' & cleaned can go in those bins. (See section on LDPE earlier in this document)

- What is clingfilm and has it been made genuinely safer in the last 20 years? I remember when they said certain components could migrate into fatty food, for instance. Can it be recycled at all? given that it will probably be contaminated with food and not washable. (I use plates and saucers on top of things in the fridge, and greaseproof paper for wrapping - perfectly acceptable).

Clingfilm is PVC and toxic, it leeches and also is a single use non-recyclable plastic. Don't be tricked by biodegradable versions, it has to say compostable to be environmentally friendly.

- I looked for a yoga mat which was 'phthalate-free'. what does this mean? I failed to find a sufficiently durable non plastic mat, in the end "All of our Oeko-Tex yoga mats are tested against harmful substances for skin contact ... yoga mats may contain heavy metals, DOP softeners and other chemicals. Our Oeko-Tex Yoga Mats are latex free ...mats are made in accordance with strict environmental regulations which minimise the impact of their production on the environment. This can only be said of EkoTex™ yoga mats made in Europe." [https://www.oeko-tex.com/en/business/certifications\\_and\\_services/ots\\_100/ots\\_100\\_start.xhtml](https://www.oeko-tex.com/en/business/certifications_and_services/ots_100/ots_100_start.xhtml)

I am not sure we discussed this. I looked at the German site and the mat seems to be made from PVC. (Aus PVC und mit dem Öko-Tex Siegel Produktklasse I zertifiziert.) So while safe for you to use, it might be hard to dispose of it environmentally friendly. I read good reviews for this Scottish brand: <http://www.ecoyoga.co.uk/ecomats.htm>, but have not tried them personally. But I am OK with latex, no allergies there. It is a very good point to raise though and perhaps we can discuss more over gardening.

Is Melanin OK for children's crockery? In general re-use of plastic is better than to just chuck it for the sake of it. Always try to no break surfaces, like cuts or cracks, since that is where plastic then will leech into food.

I found one article on this: <https://eatbelive.com/2011/04/19/is-melamine-dinnerware-safe/> perhaps a starting point?

Currently BPA-free plastics are considered safe. Plastics last longer when not exposed to heat, such as being cleaned in the dishwasher.

I hope this helps, any comments let me know! Oh, one more thing: perhaps check the FB group: Zero Waste Heroes