

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT PLASTIC POLLUTION

Plastic bags and bottles, like all forms of plastic, create significant environmental and economic burdens. They consume growing amounts of energy and other natural resources, degrading the environment in numerous ways. In addition to using up fossil fuels and other resources, plastic products create litter, hurt marine life, and threaten the basis of life on earth. We are producing over 25 million tons of plastics per year in the United States, a trivial fraction of which is getting recycled. Here are some steps that you can take to reverse the tide of toxic, non-biodegradable pollution so that it will not overtake our planet.

PERSONAL STEPS	Comments
Take no plastic bags from the grocer's shelf.	Put produce in paper, canvas, and other healthy-fiber bags.
Refuse plastic bags at the check-out counter.	If a clerk throws your box of soap into a plastic bag, ask him or her to replace it in one of your bags. Give the clerk a copy of "Why I Don't Use Plastic Bags." Our experience has been that they appreciate this information.
Don't buy plastic sandwich bags.	Use wax paper bags, cloth napkins, or re-useable sandwich boxes (e.g., tiffins, described below).
Buy beverages in sustainable containers.	Use only glass bottles or cans.
Don't open another plastic water bottle. Take drinking water from the tap.	Bottled water costs over 1000 times more per liter than water from your tap. Buying our most essential nutrient, water, from corporations represents an abdication of community control of the commons. If you have concerns about water safety, investigate a filter system such as Multi-Pure. Better yet, work with your water district to develop stricter standards for water purity.
Buy fresh produce in Mother Nature's wrappers (shell, rind, husk, etc.).	Pre-bagged produce not only uses wasteful packaging, but also tends to come from farther away, consuming more of our dwindling oil supplies in transport.
Give up Tupper Ware and related products.	Tiffins (stainless steel food containers) are a long tradition in India. They store food well, have longer lives than Tupper Ware and its look-alikes (you've probably seen the fading, corroding, and chipping that occurs to these plastic containers), are more hygienic, and have a certain panache.
Make a habit of thinking about what comes with each thing that you buy.	Look for and reward earth-friendly packaging choices. e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy greeting cards in paper boxes instead of clear plastic shells • Ask your florist for flowers wrapped in paper, not clear film • Use pens that re-fill instead of land-fill
Make a habit of thinking more in general.	Conscious consumption is not only good for the earth, it's good for you. "Mindfulness," says Thich Nhat Hanh, "is the miracle by which we master and restore ourselves."

INFORMING OTHERS	Comments
Give away action sheets.	We will give you copies of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Don’t Think of a Plastic Bag!” • “Why I Don’t Use Plastic Bags” • Other articles and background sheets For copies call Green Sangha at (510) 532-6574.
Encourage stores to change their practices.	Share articles such as those listed above. Ask for a meeting with the manager or owner. We’ll join you, or help you prepare for a successful conversation.
Organize a presentation on the hidden costs of plastics.	Members of Green Sangha will be happy to make a presentation for your church, school, civic association, or club. Call us c/o (415) 459-0176.
Study the materials and make a presentation yourself.	Green Sangha is a member of the Campaign Against the Plastics Plague, which provides a slide show and supporting notes at no cost. We offer trainings on how to make presentations in your communities.
Remove plastic from your office or business, and tell your customers why.	Green Sangha will give you sample articles and displays for your restaurant, grocery store, or hotel, explaining to customers the benefits of replacing plastic packaging and reducing waste in general.
SHOWING SUPPORT	Comments
Get involved hands-on.	<p><u>Help clean up the mess!</u> Across the state, over 290 non-profit and governmental agencies organize volunteer efforts to clean up the coast and prevent pollution. For example, in Marin County:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. California Coastal Cleanup Day happens the third Saturday of September each year, 9 to noon. Marin County coordinator is Keley Stock (415) 332-3871, or e-mail: Keley.D.Stock@spd02.usace.army.mil 2. The Salmon Protection and Watershed Network (SPAWN) hosts periodic clean-ups. Check their website, spawnusa.org, or call (415) 488-0370. 3. The Cordell Bank Marine Sanctuary also leads clean-ups at county beaches. Contact Joanne Mohr at (415) 561-6625 x307 or jmohr@farallones.org <p><i>For a complete listing of agencies in California, go to:</i> http://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/directory/resdirectory/rdindex.html</p>

Throwing a plastic bag into the garbage, I know that I am throwing a plastic bag into the garbage.” That awareness alone helps us protect the Earth, make peace, and take care of life in the present moment and in the future. If we are aware, naturally we will try to use fewer plastic bags. This is an act of peace, a basic kind of peace action.

Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Is Every Step* (1992, p. 108)

**Green Sangha is a spiritual community dedicated to environmental action.
Groups are based in Marin County, the East Bay, and beyond (start one in your community!)
We meet monthly to meditate, educate, support one another, and perform environmental actions.
www.greensangha.org (510) 532-6574**