

LET'S TALK ABOUT *Plastic Bags*

This important information is brought to you by **Northbrook Farmers Market** because we believe that change begins when people understand how their choices contribute to solutions for our planet.



We use A LOT of plastic bags

Over 1 trillion plastic bags are used every year worldwide; the U.S. contributes 100 billion to that staggering amount!

Plastic bags choke our landfills and landscapes

More than 3.5 million tons of plastic bags are discarded annually. Less than 3% are recycled. The vast majority end up in landfills--as well as in forests, rivers, and oceans around the world.

They don't really break down

A single plastic bag can take decades to degrade in the less-than-ideal setting of a landfill. In reality, most plastic does not ever disappear, but becomes long-lasting "plastic dust."

Plastic bags are toxin carriers

When plastic bags deteriorate, they readily soak up (and release) toxins that then contaminate soil and water, as well as harm animals that ingest plastic fragments.

Plastic bags are an ever-present danger to aquatic life

Plastic bags are part of the second-most common type of ocean garbage (after cigarette butts). Bags cause the death of millions of marine animals including fish, sea turtles, sharks, whales, dolphins, and especially birds, when animals mistake them for food.

Plastic bags are costly

Plastic bags are not free--they cost U.S. retailers about \$4 billion a year. We, the end-users, pay for them in higher prices. Also, millions of barrels of petroleum are needed to make all these plastic bags. Petroleum production and its use harm the environment by polluting air and water. While we cannot eliminate petroleum use from our economy, we certainly can reduce it.

You can do your part to reduce the amount of plastic bag waste ending up in landfills, landscapes and oceans

There are many ways:

We start by making a cultural shift away from use-and-toss mentality, and it starts right here, right now. One of the easiest first steps is to reduce and eventually eliminate your use of plastic bags.*

How to do this?

Use the tote bags that are already in your house or car! Take comfort in knowing that each reusable tote eliminates hundreds (if not thousands) of plastic bags in our world.

Next steps:

Engage with your community to clean up the local environment. Help out wherever and whenever you can. Join an environmental group such as Go Green Northbrook.

Speak up: together we can pressure local governments to ban or tax the use of plastic bags the same way more than a dozen nations already have done.**

*The solution is not switching to paper bags or compostable plastic bags. Why? A study on the life cycle of three types of disposable bags (single-use plastic, paper, and compostable plastic) showed that the added energy requirements for manufacturing and transport of paper and compostable bags far exceed that of the standard plastic bag system.

** In 2001 Ireland implemented PlasTax, the first of its kind. This route acknowledges that people will still occasionally use plastic bags. This market-based solution discourages daily, thoughtless use of plastic bags by charging a nominal fee at checkout. The Irish government found that plastic bag usage has dropped 93.5%. This breaks down to a drop from 328 to 21 bags per person each year. We can do this folks! Original studies for all these facts can be found at Plasticbaglaws.org.



*Eat Fresh. Shop Local.
Save the Earth.*

