



How to Recycle

Where to Recycle

Inspire & Motivate Living & Well-Being

Reading time: 2 mins

Earth Action: Eliminate Plastic Produce Bags



By Gemma Alexander

© SEP 9, 2022 #earth action, plastic pollution, Plastic-bags, single-use plastic



Earth911 is honoring the 52 years of Earth Day with 52 Actions for the Earth. Each week through Earth Day 2023, we will share an action you can take to [invest in the Earth](#) and make your own life more sustainable. Sometimes an action for the Earth takes literally no time or money. But it might feel uncomfortable because you've been trained to do things differently. This week, you can invest in the Earth by skipping the produce bags at the grocery store.

Action: Eliminate Produce Bags

Single-Use Plastic

Unless this is your first time visiting Earth911, you probably know about the environmental damage caused by plastics at every stage of their lifecycle, especially when they break down into [microplastics](#). It's important for everyone to be working towards a [post-plastic world](#) to break free of [plastic pollution](#). Eliminating your personal plastic usage entirely may not be possible in a world where nearly every product contains some kind of plastic. But eliminating single use-plastics like [water bottles](#) is a good place to start. And few single-use plastic items have a shorter useful life than grocery store produce bags. Even plastic

What Do You Think?

Are you considering moving because of climate change?

- No
- I'm researching my options to decide
- Yes

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shopping bags are often reused to line wastebaskets or clean up the catbox. But produce bags travel from produce aisle to your countertop, often to be tossed before the food even goes in the fridge.

When You Need a Bag

Sometimes a bag is necessary. Mushrooms last longer in a paper sack, which is recyclable. And some small items like green beans need to be bagged to keep them together. For those items, some co-ops and health food stores allow you to bring your own reusable bag or container. But if your grocer doesn't allow you to bring reusable containers — and you have access to composting services — you might consider buying your own [compostable bags](#) for these items.

Going Bagless

Most of the time, produce bags aren't necessary. Not for cleanliness — whether you bag or not, you should wash your produce before you eat it. Not for protection — whether you bag or not, you can't stack heavy items on top of produce in the shopping cart or in grocery bags. Most produce doesn't really need to be kept together, either. Bagging two heads of broccoli or three apples doesn't really save time at the register or when putting food away. Small items like asparagus are already tied together, and bigger ones like celery don't even fit in produce bags very well.

This week, when you do your grocery shopping, put produce in your cart without bagging it first. As long as you don't stack heavy things on top (which you wouldn't do to bagged produce either) your produce should arrive home in the same condition it always does. And you will have eliminated half a dozen or more plastic bags whose useful life is rarely more than an hour or two.

[Edit](#)



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By [Gemma Alexander](#)

Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing [here](#).

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