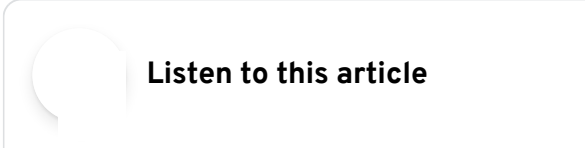


Inspire & Motivate



Reading time: 2 mins

# Earth Action: Pare Your Plastic Use



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

MAR 10, 2023 [earth action](#), [plastic waste](#)

**Is Your Company's Money Aligned with Its Mission?**

Introducing Green 401(k)s from Carbon Collective, the first investment advisor 100% focused solving climate change.

[LEARN MORE](#)



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. Plastic is a tremendously useful material, but the drawbacks are too big to ignore. From greenhouse gases to litter and microplastic pollution, plastic causes a lot of harm. This week, you can take action for the Earth by paring down your own plastic use.

## Action: Pare Your Plastic Use

### Plastic Pollution

Each year, more than [350 million metric tons](#) of plastic are produced worldwide. Plastic is a petroleum product that generates greenhouse gas emissions throughout its lifecycle – from extracting fossil fuels in the first place to manufacturing, shipping, and incineration. Few types of plastic are [recyclable](#), and the ones that are, rarely make their way to recycling centers. Unrecycled plastic contributes to litter, even in supposedly pristine areas like [national parks](#).

And that litter eventually makes its way to the [ocean](#), where it forms [garbage gyres](#) and breaks down into [microplastics](#) that bioaccumulate, even contaminating the [human body](#).

## Single-Use Plastic

Plastic is so ubiquitous, you can't just wake up one morning and decide to [live plastic-free](#). Achieving a [post-plastic world](#) will take a lot of work and must be pursued incrementally. Eliminating single-use plastics is the best place to start. Single-use plastics have the most environmental impact relative to their usefulness and there are many reusable options to replace them. It's a lot easier to eliminate [zip-top bags](#) than to find a plastic-free automobile.

## Paring the Plastic

The first step is to conduct a [plastics inventory](#) to figure out how much plastic you use and dispose of. An inventory will identify which type of plastic to eliminate to make the most difference in your personal plastic footprint. If you have been following along with the weekly Earth Actions, you already did this several months ago. If you haven't, go ahead and do that right now, and come back to this article when you're ready to do more.

Changing habits is hard, so there's no shame if you tried cutting out a category of plastic last summer and it has managed to sneak back into your life this winter. But if that's your situation, this week is your opportunity to start over. Maybe [reading books](#) about the impacts of plastic pollution will steel your resolve or the stories of people who have gone [plastic-free](#) will inspire you to try again.

And if you have already made progress eliminating some single-use plastics from your lifestyle, this week you can pare your plastics use even further. Revisit your inventory to identify the next most important target and start looking for reusable alternatives to your single-use [household items](#). Maybe you've already conquered single-use items and are ready to move on to short-lived plastics like [toothbrushes](#). Whether you are looking for reusable [water bottles](#) or looking for compostable [phone cases](#), Earth911 is full of ideas. Browse the site for ways to eliminate [plastic packaging](#), find [plastic-free toys](#), or even switch to plastic-free [chewing gum](#).

---

advertising



[Reading time: 2 mins](#)

[Reading time: 2 mins](#)

[Earth911 Podcast: Author John Perlin Explores the Role of Trees in the Rise & Fate of Civilization](#)

[Have You Considered Joining a Community Garden?](#)



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](#).