

General Plastics & Paper: List of Topics

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Eliminating Our Consumption of Bottled Water



“Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good...” - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* [Encyclical], #205.

Did you know?

Many myths exist about drinking bottled vs. tap water, so you may not know that...

- ❖ Tap water has often been found to be of higher quality than bottled water.
- ❖ Only about 9% of plastic bottles placed in a recycling bin are actually recycled.
- ❖ About 3 times the water provided in a water bottle is consumed during production.
- ❖ Bottled water costs almost 2,000 times more than the same amount of tap water.
- ❖ About 1/3 of bottled water comes from filtered tap water.
- ❖ Reliance on bottled water can result in less pressure on governments to invest in improving or maintaining public drinking water infrastructure.

Act Now!

Eliminating bottled water is easy and will have a big impact.

- Support a policy to discourage the consumption of single-use bottled water throughout the convent. Requesting touchless water dispensers is a great alternative.
- Purchase a reusable water bottle. These are available online and in any large department store.
- Purchase a water filter for your kitchen faucet or a filtered water pitcher or dispenser (e.g., Brita) that can be placed in your refrigerator.

Sustainable and Compostable Cups, Cutlery & Plates



"Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability," - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* [Encyclical], #207.

Did you know?

Some facts you may not know about plastic and paper products include the following:

- ❖ Many products are made from plastic that is very difficult to recycle.
- ❖ Many paper products include a plastic lining that prevents food or liquid from soaking through.
- ❖ Biodegradable does not mean compostable.
- ❖ Many products labeled as compostable do not fully compost.
- ❖ Many paper and wood products involve the clearing of forests or the destruction of wildlife feeding grounds.

Act Now!

There are many sustainable options available.

- ✓ Look for products that are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (labeled as **FSC-certified**) as coming from materials that were sustainably grown and harvested.
- ✓ Look for products that are certified compostable by the Biodegradable Products Institute (labeled as **BPI-certified**).
- ✓ The following companies sell BPI- and/or FSC-certified products that are available online:
 - Cups: Maytree, Greeviro
 - Cutlery: Biocean, Sakuchi, Ecovita, Zebraz, Gezond, Treaterly, Woodable, Great Value (Walmart)
 - Plates: EcoSmart, ECO SOUL, Sakuchi, Gezond, Green Wave

Deciding between

Plastic, Paper & Reusable Bags

"An awareness of the gravity of today's cultural and ecological crisis must be translated into new habits." - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical]*, #209.

Did you know?

There are many myths about the most sustainable bag type, so you may not know that...

- ❖ Most of the negative environmental impact in the form of greenhouse gas emissions occurs during the production and shipping of plastic bags.
- ❖ Reusable cloth bags must be re-used approximately 131 times in order to have a smaller carbon footprint than single-use plastic bags.
- ❖ Many paper products (including bags) are not sustainable (e.g., harvested from virgin trees instead of tree farms; require the clearing of forests; grown in areas where wildlife feeds).
- ❖ There are many options for certified compostable garbage bags of all sizes.



Act Now!



There are many options for sustainable and compostable bags available.

- ✓ Select paper when given the choice between plastic, paper or reusable/cloth bags.
- ✓ Purchase paper bags that are certified sustainable by the Forest Stewardship Council (labeled as FSC-certified) and compostable by the Biodegradable Products Institute (labeled as BPI-certified). One example is those made by Duro.
- ✓ Use garbage bags that are certified compostable (labeled BPI-certified). Examples include those made by Unni, Biotrashbag, BioBags, Primode, and SecondNatureBags.

Sustainable and Safe Food Storage



Every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in "lifestyles, models of production and consumption,..." - Pope Francis. 2015. Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical], #5.

Did you know?

Plastic is effective for storing and insulating food, but you may not know that...

- ❖ Americans use about 365 plastics bags per person per year (National Geographic, 2018).
- ❖ Plastic food storage containers and bags are made from three major categories of plastics (#3, 4, 5), all of which are not easily recycled.
- ❖ Styrofoam take-out containers, or clamshells, are made from foamed or expanded polystyrene (plastic #6), which is a hazardous material considered to be a human carcinogen by the World Health Organization.
- ❖ Storing or reheating hot foods and liquids in Styrofoam containers can cause styrene to leach into what you are ingesting.
- ❖ Plastic wraps (aka. Saran Wrap and cling film) are made from Plastic #3. Because they are thin, clingy, and flimsy, they can easily clog standard recycling machines.

Act Now!

There are many options for plastic-free and certified compostable food storage available.

- ✓ Plastic-free food storage bags made from vegetables and/or corn starch are available. Examples that are certified compostable (labeled BPI-certified) include those made by Unni, Eargardin, Harps&Seb, Jencenbio, moonycgreen.
- ✓ Compostable food storage containers made from sugarcane are available. BPI-certified examples with or without compartments include Ethereal Earth, Green Earth, Eco Products.
- ✓ Reusable food wrap made from beeswax and GOTS-certified organic cotton are available. Examples include Bee's Wrap and BYTTME. (GOTS = Global Organic Textile Standard)
- ✓ Consider advocating for a ban on Styrofoam food containers in your community or state.

Reducing Polyester in Our Clothing & Linens



"Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment." - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* [Encyclical], #211.

Did you know?

Many myths exist about using polyester in clothing and linens, so you may not know that...

- ❖ One of the primary uses of recycled Category 1 plastics (including recycled water bottles) is in the production of polyester. Therefore, much of those water bottles that are recycled still end up as microplastics in our water.
- ❖ Between about 640,000 and 1.5 million microfibers are released into the water per kilogram of materials washed when doing the laundry.
- ❖ Even fabric and clothing made from 100% natural materials, such as cotton, may contain pesticides and dyes that pollute the environment and can cause irritation.

Act Now!

Sustainable alternatives to polyester are available.

- ✓ Look for clothing that is made from 100% ORGANIC natural fibers (e.g., cotton, hemp, linen, silk, and wool).
- ✓ Look for other products made from fabric that comes from 100% ORGANIC natural fibers; examples include towels & wash cloths, tablecloths, reusable napkins, rugs, etc.
- ✓ Check out the following companies that [sell](#) products made from 100% ORGANIC natural fibers: Rawganique, Made Trade, The Ultimate Green Store, Pottery Barn, Everlastly Home, Smallable, I Love Linen, and Hazia from the North.
- ✓ [Purchase](#) a laundry ball (e.g., Cora Ball) to help reduce the number of microfibers released into the water during washing.

How to Make Your Bathroom Plastic-Free



“There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions...”

- Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical]*, #211.

Did you know?

Among the many alternatives to plastic in the bathroom, you may not have known that...

- ❖ Various brands are now making toothpaste tubes made from only one type of plastic (#2) so that they can be recycled.
- ❖ Bamboo toothbrushes are a sustainable alternative to plastic brushes; certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) ensures the bamboo is sustainably grown and harvested.
- ❖ All except the bristles of a bamboo toothbrush can be composted.
- ❖ Shampoo and conditioner bars are becoming increasingly popular plastic-free alternatives to products that come in plastic bottles.

Act Now!

Try switching to the following plastic-free alternatives one at a time.

- ✓ Use fluoride toothpaste tablets as a plastic-free option to toothpaste tubes (e.g., Tidalove, unPaste, Denttabs). If tubes are preferred, multiple brands claim to be recyclable (e.g., Colgate, Crest, and Toms of Maine).
- ✓ Use bamboo toothbrushes; look for those certified by the FSC (labeled as FSC-certified) (e.g., Brush with Bamboo).
- ✓ Use floss made from silk. Brush with Bamboo, for example, sells silk floss that comes in a glass container.
- ✓ Use shampoo and conditioner bars instead of bottled shampoo (e.g., Aspen Kay Naturals (sulphate-free), anihana, Garnier Whole Blends, Viori, and Ethique).

Finding Sustainable & Plastic-Free Cleaning Products



These efforts “call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread.”

- Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* [Encyclical], #212.

Did you know?

Many false claims are made about the sustainability of cleaning products; for example,...

- ❖ Product labels such as “green,” “plant-based,” “natural,” “organic,” and/or “non-toxic” are typically used as buzz words to lure you into making a purchase.
- ❖ Many cleaning products advertised as being free of dyes and scents contain additional chemicals that remove the color and odor found in the original version of the product.
- ❖ Detergent pods and sheets are often viewed as “plastic-free” alternatives to bottled detergent, though they do contain a thin layer of plastic that either covers the pod or is interwoven into the sheet and does not fully disappear when dissolved in water.

Act Now!

Finding sustainable options for cleaning products all in one place.

- ✓ Consult the website of the Environmental Working Group (EWG) (<https://www.ewg.org/guides/cleaners/>) to find sustainable options based on health and environmental concerns for various types of cleaning products.
- ✓ Consider laundry detergent tablets as a plastic-free option to liquid detergent. The EWG gives the Blueland tablets its highest rating of “Verified.”
- ✓ Consider dishwasher tablets and packets as plastic-free alternatives to liquid detergent. The EWG gives the Blueland and Branch Basics tablets and Defunkify packets its highest rating.
- ✓ Purchase a laundry ball (e.g., Cora Ball) to help reduce the number of microfibers released into the water when washing clothes.

Sustainable Options for Disposable Napkins, Paper Towels, & Tissues

We need to “acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God’s creation through our actions...” - Pope Francis. 2015. *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home [Encyclical]*, #218.

Did you know?

Many paper products are not as sustainable as you think, so you may not know that...

- ❖ Raw materials used to produce paper and wood products often require the clearing of forests and/or are grown in areas essential to the survival of indigenous populations and wildlife.
- ❖ Many of the sustainable options available today are almost as comfortable to use and visually attractive as their less sustainable counterparts, even without the addition of chemicals and dyes.
- ❖ Napkins, paper towels, and tissues, often produce plastic waste through their packaging.



Act Now!



Make sure that the paper products you use are FSC-certified and plastic-free.

- ✓ Look for products that are shipped in plastic-free packaging.
- ✓ Look for products that are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (labeled as **FSC-certified**) as coming from materials that were sustainably grown and harvested.
- ✓ The following companies **sell** products that are plastic-free and FSC-certified; all use bamboo unless otherwise noted: Grove Co., Betterway, Caboo, Cloud Paper, Bamboo Story, Amazon Aware, Repurpose, The Cheeky Panda, Reel (recycled paper)