

Retail Solutions

Reuse, Repurpose and Recycle Plastic Bags

Studies tell us that plastic grocery bags consume less energy to produce, transport and recycle than paper grocery sacks. The problem is that the vast majority of them do not get recycled.

This modern “urban tumbleweed” clogs our gutters, kills wildlife and makes the world less beautiful. World-watch Institute estimates that the United States throws away 100 billion plastic shopping bags every year. Here are 24 ways to prevent that.



- Bring reusable totes and plastic bags to stores.
- Go through the self-checkout to add more items to each bag.
- Put items in a purse or briefcase or carry them out.
- Use a plastic grocery bag to clean up behind the dog and scoop out the litter box.
- Donate bags to a local dog park and animal shelter.
- Wrap homemade bread in a clean, plastic grocery bag to keep it fresh.
- Reuse plastic bags to pack lunches.
- Line a cutting board for easy cleanup of messy jobs; collect vegetable shavings.
- Use a clean bag as a non-stick surface for rolling out dough.
- Substitute twisted bags for rope or plastic zip ties.
- Use plastic bags as packing material, instead of Styrofoam packing peanuts.
- Line paint trays with plastic bags before pouring in paint for easy cleanup.
- Keep bags in the trunk of the car for emergencies.
- Reuse plastic grocery bags as camping trip garbage bags.
- Pick up bags at the park or along the road to collect garbage and recyclable litter.
- Keep plastic grocery bags in the diaper bag.
- Donate bags to local libraries, thrift stores and daycare centers.
- For travel, wrap a plastic bag around the toiletry bag to contain spills.
- Tie bags around both feet to keep shoes clean when traversing a muddy area.
- Protect work surfaces with plastic bags when doing messy crafts.
- Make recycled fabric tubes stuffed with plastic bags to block drafts and save energy.
- Cut the bags into loops and knot them together into plastic “yarn,” to make braided rugs, woven baskets and crocheted bags.
- Fuse plastic bags together to create plastic fabric.
- Support companies that use recycled plastic, from makers of handmade African crafts to designer chairs and composite decking.

Source: Adapted from *RusticGirls.com*



Reusable totes can be an environmental boon, vastly reducing the number of disposable bags that wind up in landfills. If each bag is used twice a week, five reusable bags can replace 520 bags a year.

Source: Nick Sterling, research director, Natural Capitalism Solutions