

Recycling NJ

Plastic Bags

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Plastic Bags

Plastic bags are very much vilified by environmental activists because they are thrown away in huge numbers every year and take thousands of years to decompose in a land fill. They are also partially responsible for littering the worlds oceans and countryside, often causing death or injury to wild animals and birds.

However, for a moment at least, I am going to stick up for the plastic bag because its most vilified characteristic, that it takes years to decompose, can actually be considered one of its greatest assets. A plastic bag in many ways is quite an incredible piece of engineering. It is capable of carrying hundreds of times its own weight, yet it takes up very little space of its own, is easy to manufacture and the fact that it takes a long time to decompose, means that it can be reused hundreds, thousands or even millions of times over before it is no longer fit for purpose.

When you think about plastic bags in this way, you come to realize that it is not the bags themselves that are bad for the environment, but the disposable, throw away nature in which plastic bags are commonly used. If we all get into the habit of taking our plastic bags back to the store or use cloth/cotton bags instead, then enormous amounts of plastic will be saved from the land fill.

Reduce and Reuse

It is a good idea to limit your use of plastic bags by switching to reusable cloth/cotton bags; these bags can be washed in a washing machine, to keep them clean. It is also a good idea to keep some of your cloth bags dedicated for meat products and use the other cloth bags for everything else.

Use reusable bags when shopping at the mall as well as the supermarket.

All supermarkets and many smaller retail chains give a discount on your shopping bill (usually \$0.05) for every bag you reuse, so you will very quickly recoup the cost of purchasing the reusable bag.

Any plastic bags can be reused. You can reuse the plastic bags that you put loose vegetables in at the supermarket simply by taking them back to the supermarket each time and using them over and over again. If you empty out your fruit and vegetables into washable containers in your refrigerator then you can immediately put all the plastic bags you bought the fruit and vegetable in, back into your reusable

Plastic Bag recycling for NJ Apartment Complexes

Bag Up is a new business created by entrepreneurs in New Jersey that provides plastic bag recycling for apartment complexes in New Jersey.

Landlords and property managers can partner with Bag Up to provide their residents with a designated plastic bag recycling collection to go alongside the more typical recycling collections for plastic bottles, glass, metal cans and paper that are commonly provided by with local municipality.

At present Bag Up operates in the area of Hudson and South Bergen counties.

If you wish to learn more about their plastic bag recycling collection services, check out the Bag Up website, call (609) 234-3417 or email BagUpNJ@gmail.com.

cloth shopping bag ready to be taken to the supermarket for your next shopping trip. Find a convenient place to hang your reusable bags like on the back of the front door or the door to the garage, so that you do not forget to put the bags back in the trunk of your car ready for your next shopping trip.

Plastic Bag Recycling

It costs energy to recycle a plastic bag but does not cost anything to reuse an old one, making it considerably better for the environment overall to reuse plastic bags than it is to recycle them. However, eventually the plastic bag will break and then it can be recycled into new plastic products.

Plastic bags are made from either high density polyethylene (plastic #2) or low density polyethylene (plastic #4) but they do not need to be separated by plastic type before recycling (they are both made from polyethylene, it is just the amount of cross-linking of the plastic polymers that is different between plastic #2 and plastic #4). You can take your unwanted plastic bags to your local supermarket where they will have a collection box at the front of the store.

Check that the bag is completely empty and clean first though.

The following stores have a plastic bag + plastic wrap recycling box in their stores.

- A&P Food Stores
- ACME
- Emerson Cleaners
- Foodtown
- Home Depot
- JCPenny
- Lowe's
- McCaffrey's
- Pathmark
- Sam's Club
- Shop Rite
- Stop & Shop
- Target
- Walmart
- Wegmans Food Market Inc
- Weis Market
- Whole Foods

Plastic Wraps

There are two main types of plastic wrap that are commonly used.

1. The thin, cling film wrap is usually made from polyvinyl chloride or polyvinylidene chloride and cannot be recycled. This plastic wrap is commonly used to wrap food or to cover containers for food storage. It usually comes in rolls of plastic wrap/film.
2. The thicker plastic wraps are made from the same plastic material as plastic bags, polyethylene and can be easily recycled throughout New Jersey. This plastic wrap is used in the packaging of bottled water cases, toilet paper packs, paper towels, diaper packaging and is also used to make the plastic bags found inside cereal boxes.

Plastic Wrap Recycling

You can include some plastic wraps with your plastic bag recycling because they are also made from polyethylene. These can be taken to your local supermarket and placed in the plastic bag collection box at the front of the store. For a complete list of all the plastic bag and plastic wrap types that can be recycled in this way, go to the consumer page at www.plasticbagrecycling.org.