

Consumer Swaps - April 2022

Reusable Grocery Bags vs. Plastic

Why are Grocery Bags so Harmful?

Americans alone toss two billion plastic grocery bags every single day. (Reuse) If that number alone isn't enough to give you pause, here are some of the devastating effects that those 2 billion bags have:

- It can take a grocery bag 15 to 1,000 years to decompose. The landfill environment does not promote rapid decomposition, meaning this typically slants toward the high end of the range.
- Recycling plastic bags is notoriously difficult, as they often get caught in machinery. Many recycling plants do not even accept them, meaning approximately 98% are destined to be tossed into a landfill or pollute the environment.
- An estimated one million birds, along with an untold number of sea creatures, are killed from ingesting parts of littered plastic bags. (Reuse)

The Benefits of Switching to Reusable Bags

Reusable bags have an impressive amount of benefits. Aside from avoiding all of the above stated negative environmental effects, they can save you money and hassle. Here are some of the reasons you may want to consider picking up a few reusable bags for yourself:

Store Promotions and Cost: More and more stores are offering discounts when you bring your own bags. Target, Whole Foods, and Trader Joe's, among others, give a small discount per bag you use while Aldi charges a small fee for paper and plastic bags in their stores which is circumvented with reusable bags.

No More Broken Bags: Plastic grocery bags are not known for their durability, and that can mean a parking lot disaster or other frustrations. The handles can also cut into hands, causing discomfort. Cloth bags have wider, more comfortable handles and can last year and years before tearing or wearing down.

Ease of Use: Plastic bags may seem like the height of convenience, but reusable bags give them a run for their money. They can be stowed in your car at all times and tossed in the wash whenever they need cleaned. While some more environmentally friendly options require a considerable initial investment or laborious upkeep, the switch from one-use grocery bags is simple, easy, and cost-effective.

Works Cited

Lober, Douglas. "Why Use Custom Reusable Grocery Totes." Awesome Wholesale Reusable Grocery Bags & Bulk Shopping Totes, ReuseThisBag.com, 13 Oct. 2021, <https://www.reusethisbag.com/articles/why-use-reusable-shopping-bags>.

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