

Shades of Green

A Guide to Living Clean & Green

Vegetable Gardening Basics

Gardening Tips

Plastic Pollution

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Earth Friendly Facts

How to:

Make Material from Plastic Bags

Cut The Clutter:

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As you sit down to plan your garden, please consider adding a few extra plants and donate to your local food bank. Give a helping-hand to those who may not have the opportunity to grow their own food.



And Man created the plastic bag and the tin and aluminum can and the cellophane wrapper and the paper plate, and this was good because Man could then take his automobile and buy all his food in one place and He could save that which was good to eat in the refrigerator and throw away that which had no further use. And soon the earth was covered with plastic bags and aluminum cans and paper plates and disposable bottles and there was nowhere to sit down or walk, and Man shook his head and cried: "Look at this Godawful mess." ~Art Buchwald, 1970

Vegetable Gardening Basics

Plan

A good vegetable garden must have at least six hours of full sun each day. The soil should be very fertile and well draining so that water never puddles after a rain storm. Windy areas should be avoided.

Usually, the garden should be surrounded by a sufficiently high fence with close mesh to keep out animals. A fence also can serve as a trellis for crops that need support. To prevent shading of the shorter plants, plant your tallest crops on the north end of the plot, and shorter crops in front.

A soil with a pH lower than 7.0 is an acid soil and one with a pH higher than 7.0 is alkaline. You can buy an inexpensive pH test kit at most nurseries, and many good garden centers will gladly test a soil sample for you.



Plant

Once you have determined the pH you can amend the soil as needed. The soil should be tilled one last time, and raked smooth.

Water your garden thoroughly the day before you intend to plant.

Plant extra seeds in each row to allow for failed germination, and for thinning. Cover the seeds with fine soil (no clods or rocks). Firm the soil over the seeds to insure good moisture contact, and to help retain the moisture in the soil. Water thoroughly using a gentle spray so that you don't disturb or uncover the seeds. It is important to keep the soil moist until the seedlings are up.

As Your Garden Grows

When the seedlings have developed their second or third set of true leaves, thin them as needed, keeping the strongest plants and leaving them spaced as directed on the seed package. It is best to thin while the seedlings are still small.

Gardening Tips

- ◇ Most vegetables benefit from an inch or more water each week, especially when they are fruiting.
- ◇ Mulching between the rows will help to control weeds, conserve moisture in the soil, and provide you with pathways to access your plants. Black plastic, grass clippings, straw, wood chips, or garden debris may be used.
- ◇ Be vigilante against insect pests. Discovering a bug problem early will make it much easier to take appropriate action and eliminate the pests. Do not use pesticides once the plants have fruited unless it becomes an absolute necessity, and be sure to follow the manufacturers recommendations.
- ◇ Keep weeds pulled out regularly (try to get the entire root) and the job isn't too bad.



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Plastic Pollution

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

In the past few years, environmental issues have gained a lot of public attention. People are trying to preserve our earth's resources. World governments are legislating to reduce and eliminate consumption of plastic check-out bags. They are working in conjunction with retailers to phase out light-weight plastic bags by the end of 2008.

Plastic is a big threat to our planet Earth. Plastic bags have a lifespan of 2000 years, they are not biodegradable, and plastic does not decompose without the use of chemicals triggered by light or heat to break it down. Biodegradable plastic will break down naturally into an organic substance.

Only 80% of U. S. waste makes its way to landfills. Plastic bags are visual pollution, and a health hazard. They clog sewer pipes, creating standing water, and they are also dangerous to our wildlife, particularly marine animals. They are mistaken for food, and when eaten, the bags block the animal's stomach and cause starvation.

According to the experts, paper bags are not a good alternative. Plastics take up less space than paper in landfills, and nothing much breaks down in our landfills because the waste is isolated from air and water. Both forms of shopping bag are harmful to the environment when they are thrown away. Also, both types of bag are made from fossil fuels, and transporting them to the stores uses fuel which creates harmful emissions

Carrying a reusable shopping bag is probably one of the easiest things that anyone can do to make a difference. It is very effective in reducing waste and energy. They tend to be more comfortable to carry than paper or plastic bags, they hold more, and they are stronger. Because they are easier to carry, people are more likely to walk to the store instead of driving. This will reduce your carbon footprint and preserve our air quality.

So we should focus on the things that we are buying. How processed is the food you are buying, what kind of packaging is it in, and how far did it travel to get here?



Billions of plastic bags are choking our planet. All of these "free" bags ultimately cost both consumers and the environment plenty:

- ◇ Each year billions of bags end up as ugly litter.
- ◇ Eventually they break down into tiny toxic bits polluting our soil, rivers, lakes and oceans
- ◇ Production requires vast amounts of oil.
- ◇ Countless animals needlessly die each year.

Your actions count! Here are some ideas, tips and tools to help you change and reduce the mindless consumption of single use plastic and paper bags. Together we can make a difference.

1. Start use reusable shopping bags. There are many styles and designs to suit your taste and lifestyle.

2. Refuse a bag. If you don't need one, don't take one. Cashiers are programmed to keep the line moving and don't always stop to ask if you need a bag.
3. Reuse plastic bags you have accumulated.
4. Use Ultra Compact bags. Ultra Compact bags are small enough to keep in your purse, jacket, backpack, car, etc. so one is always handy.
5. Get stores to offer cash credits if you bring in your own bags.
6. Be aware of how many bags you consume: keep count. For instance, if you have a giant plastic bag holding plastic bags in your closet, take 5 minutes and count how many you have. OR, count how many plastic and paper bags you go through in a week.
7. Cut down on plastic produce bags by bringing your own reusable produce bags. Polypropylene bags and light-weight plastic bags can be recycled at the front of most supermarkets.
8. Spread the word to wake up others.
9. Shop locally, organically, and without a heavy meat base.

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Earth-Friendly Facts

In 1990, the USA generated 247 million tons of waste; in 2001 that number rose to 409 million tons.

Wind power was the only option for some farmers in the 1930's to the 1950's.

Plastic is made from the same oil that is used to make gasoline. By recycling your bottles you are not only preventing it from sitting in a landfill for the next 100 to 1000 years, but you are also saving oil.

In Australia alone, they use approximately seven billion plastic shopping bags each year.

The Hershey Company produces 20 million kisses each day. They use 133 square miles of aluminum to wrap the kisses. This material is recyclable.

For more ideas on reducing your energy consumption, please read; [Useful Energy Saving Tips](#)

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world: indeed it's the only thing that ever has!"

— Margaret Meade

We are chopping down 100 acres of rain forest every minute. By recycling half the paper we use we can save 20 million acres of forest. By rethinking how we do things as individuals, we can help to solve the problems our future may hold. Small changes can add up to larger success and savings.



Recycle - Improved recycling efforts could generate 5 to 10 jobs for every job that exists in the Waste Management sector.

Reuse - It isn't difficult to reuse materials, it just requires a little more thought. Old clothing, furniture, vehicles, computers, cell phones, books, and magazines can be donated to shelters and charitable organizations or churches. Old blankets can go to the homeless or pet shelters which also are in need of old newspapers, and towels.

Landfills contain small amounts of hazardous lead and mercury, they can be major sources of water and air pollution. Every time you throw something away, you're throwing away a resource that has to be made again. It takes less energy to create products from recycled materials than it does to create a product from scratch.



Reduce - If every home in America replaced just one light bulb with an energy saving bulb, we would save enough energy to light more than three million homes for a year, save more than \$600 million in annual energy costs, and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of 800,00 cars.

Renewable energy, such as wind, solar and hydroelectric power are free and not subject to regulation. You can reduce your fuel costs from 20 - 80%.

Since 2003, [ReusableBags.com](#) has been a major force providing facts and news on the global push to reduce plastic and paper bag consumption. As part of the solution they feature a wide range of reusable shopping bags and other innovative, practical products designed to help people consume less, preserve natural resources and save money too.



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How To Make Material From Plastic Bags

You will need;

- ◇ Plastic bags (thin, flimsy ones work best)
- ◇ Parchment paper, freezer paper or plain old copier paper
- ◇ Iron



1. Flatten out the bag and trim the bottom seam and handles off. This allows the bag to be opened up into a larger rectangle of plastic.
2. Turn the bag inside-out if it has printing on it or it will come off the bag and make a huge mess. If the bag has an interesting design that you'd like to preserve, try using a clear plastic bag layered on top of the printed one.
3. Sandwich the plastic bags in between the parchment paper.
4. Next, run a hot iron (we set ours to "Rayon", but you will need to experiment a little to see what works for you) and keep the iron moving constantly. Make sure to get the edges, and after about 15 seconds, iron the opposite side for a few seconds.
5. Peel a corner of the paper back to see if the plastic is fused together. It should be fairly smooth and "one sheet" to the touch (watch out, its a little hot). If the layers are not all melted together, iron it some more.
6. Peel the parchment paper away from the finished plastic sheet. You can use this stuff to make a million things. Such as: re-usable grocery totes, wallets, and floor cushions.

Between 6-8 layers of plastic gives the best results. Trying to fuse less than 6 layers often results in little holes forming in the finished piece and a generally weaker material. You can either fold your bag until it is 8 ply thick, or use three or more bags layered on top of one another

Cut The Clutter:

There are many books and even websites dedicated to helping you de-clutter your home, but there are some basic steps that work well:

1. Going room by room, divide your things into four boxes: things to donate, things to throw away, things to keep, and things to store. If you don't need it or love it, consider getting rid of it.
2. Go through your box of things to keep and find a place for everything. Make it a logical place that's in the same area where it'll need to be used. For example, keep keys by the door.
3. Finish one room before moving on to the next.

Note: This can all be done in a day, or can be spread out over several weeks in 30-minute increments if you work quickly. If you can only do it in "baby steps," Flylady.net has a good system that can help.

Organize What's Left: Be sure that you're storing things in a way that makes sense and looks nice. For example, kids' toys can be stored very neatly in tubs, which provide quick cleanup and keep toy clutter out of sight. Getting drawer organizers for your bathrooms and kitchen can keep drawers from overflowing with extra items. Having a filing system for

papers makes it easy to put them away and find them when you need them. Putting a little extra effort into organizing your things now will save you time in cleaning up and maintaining order for years to come.

Create Beauty: Once you have your home de-cluttered and organized, you can add a few nice touches that can make your home the ideal haven for you to relax. Music carries amazing relaxation benefits, so you should have a system in place for playing music. You may also want to have some aromatherapy candles or diffusers out. Home spa supplies are a must for the

bathroom, and a soothing bedroom can help with sleep. Finally, create a small space for yourself--it may become your favorite part of your home.

Create Positive Chi: You may also want to learn to incorporate some of the principles of Feng Shui, the ancient art of placement, to decorate your home in a way that will reduce daily stress and may help you build the type of life that you want.

Celebrate The Earth

