

# GREENWorks

## Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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### **Reduce, Reuse and yes, Recycle those plastic bags properly...**

First of all, let's make it perfectly clear that the solution to plastic bag pollution is to eliminate or reduce the use of this type of packaging whenever possible. But sometimes plastic is unavoidable. It seems like plastic packaging is everywhere. The good news is the process of recycling has made it possible to create something new from most of the waste we generate. Plastic bags are no exception, and not just those single use grocery and retail bags, but also bread and produce bags, sandwich bags, the overwrap on paper products such as toilet paper and paper towels and even plastic cereal box liners. There are a few items, such as "biodegradable" or "compostable" bags, frozen food bags, and crinkly or foil type bags for chips and other goodies, that are not included in this waste stream. Generally, if the plastic film stretches when you pull it with your fingers, it's okay to recycle it at certain designated locations. When cleaned, dried and brought back to participating stores, these items can be combined with recycled wood products and made into plastic lumber used to make decks or reprocessed into pellets or resin used to make new bags, pallets, containers, crates and even pipes.



Image courtesy of [plasticfilmrecycling.org](http://plasticfilmrecycling.org)

### **Recycle Responsibly**

Plastic bags and thin film plastics are troublesome for most recycling facilities. These items are considered 'contamination' of single stream recycling, not only jamming up sorting machines but also resulting in higher hauling rates for municipalities when there is a large percentage of them in the single stream collection. The bags and film can be difficult wastes to recycle because they need to be clean, dry and sent to a recycling facility specifically designed for them. In fact, many foreign countries, U.S. cities and the State of Hawaii have even placed a ban on plastic bags at retail outlets. Plastic pollution is a huge problem for the environment so avoid the use of unnecessary plastic when possible. If you do end up with a collection of plastic bags and plastic film items, do not throw these items in with your plastic or single stream recycling. Make sure they are clean and dry, then stuff them in a plastic bag from the grocery or retail store and place into bins located in participating stores.

**Remember:**

Reduce the amount of plastic you consume by choosing items that use the least amount of packaging and by using reusable tote bags. Reuse or repurpose the bags as much as possible and when all else fails, recycle those bags properly!

For more information on how and where to recycle this waste, check out:

<http://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org/s01/s01dropoff.html>

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