# Plastic Shopping Bags & Environmental Impact

Disposable bags may seem convenient but have proven to be a huge source of pollution. According to research conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency, somewhere between five hundred billion and one trillion disposable bags are used each year around the world. Plastic bags, while only used for an average of about twelve minutes, remain in landfills, oceans, and other places for thousands of years.

Plastic bags are created using fossil fuels and also require vast amounts of water and energy in order to have them manufactured and shipped. The production of plastic bags requires the use of billions of pounds of fossil fuels as well as billions of gallons of fresh water. The manufacturing process results in billions of pounds of solid waste and millions of tons of CO2 every year.

Plastic bags can have various negative impacts on the environment. In addition to the use of natural resources and waste from plastic bag production, plastic bags can increase the risk of flooding. Because they never break down completely, plastic bags can clog storm drains and other areas which can eventually cause severe flooding. Plastic products are also causing serious issues in the world's oceans, where pieces of plastic actually outnumber the amount of plankton in the water. The plastic pieces can lead to avian and marine life choking, consuming partially broken down pieces of plastic, and being strangled by discarded shopping bags and other items. Plastic pollution in oceans has been shown to have a negative impact on hundreds of different species of marine life.

Along with the negative impacts of plastic bags on the environment and wildlife, they are also increasingly expensive for consumers and taxpayers. While at most places, plastic bags are given out for free, retailers in the United States alone spend billions of dollars each year on them. These costs are then passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices for products. Once used, plastic bags can also be expensive to clean up and dispose of. It can cost cities and states millions of dollars to clean up and properly dispose of plastic bags.

While plastic pollution continues to be a huge problem globally, there are some steps being taken to reduce the use of disposable bags. Many individuals and businesses have begun switching to reusable bags in an effort to save money and protect the environment. Some businesses even offer a small discount for utilizing reusable bags instead of plastic. Many places are also beginning to create laws that either ban plastic bags entirely or place a fee on them, and these laws have proven to be effective in reducing plastic bag pollution. With more laws being enacted and the shift to reusable bags continuing, plastic pollution can be decreased. To learn more about plastic pollution, consult the resources listed below.

**https://www.reusethisbag.com/articles/plastic-shopping-bags-environmental-impact.php**