

Reducing Plastic Use Community Brainstorm Ideas List

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Moderated by Ariana Figueroa

The list of ideas below was generated by a group of thirteen individuals who attended the Community Brainstorm hosted by Integrative Family Medicine of Asheville's Health Coach Ariana Figueroa.

I. Actions to impact the bigger systems of governments, corporations, and culture:

- A. Ask big businesses to change the materials they are using by calling and speaking out on social media.
- B. Whenever possible as a consumer, choose not to purchase from businesses that use plastic.
- C. Call restaurants and grocery stores where you shop and request that they stop offering plastic bags, plastic to-go containers, plastic silverware, etc.
- D. Call political representatives and voice your concerns, along with potential action steps to affect change.
- E. Reach out to schools to promote education regarding what to recycle, how to recycle, and the impact of recycling.
- F. Reach out to the Buncombe County Recycling Department and request educational events, literature, and news to get the public more informed about recycling.
- G. Request that Mountain Express or Asheville Citizen Times run a monthly ad that explains what to recycle, how to recycle, and the impact of doing so.
- H. Find ways to promote a culture of recycling—city council initiatives, schools, bars, restaurants, and music venues, grocery stores, libraries, places of businesses, etc.
- I. Reach out to GreenWorks and/or the local Reducing Plastic Committee to see how you can get involved in local initiatives.

II. Actions to take on the individual lifestyle or habit level:

- A. Store vegetables in something other than plastic. For instance, greens and carrots can be stored in water-filled jars.
- B. Old plastic bottles can be stuffed with plastic and trash to be made into bricks for building projects.
- C. Shop bulk whenever possible.
 1. Use the cloth or burlap “wine bottle carriers” that have six compartments. Get quart mason jars. Take them to the grocery store in the carrier. The first time you do this, get the tare weights for the empty jars, and either 1)

write them down on scrap pieces of paper, using rubber bands to attach the paper to the jars, or 2) use a permanent marker to write directly on the glass (clean later with rubbing alcohol). This becomes an easy, fast, and safe way to fill containers with bulk foods. Scrap pieces of paper can be reused.

2. Shampoo, conditioner, olive oil, nut butters, coffee, nuts, grains, legumes, flours, sugar, and teas can be bought in bulk sections at many different grocery stores, (Local to us: French Broad Food Co-op, Earth Fare, etc.).
 3. You can often place bulk orders through co-ops, netting both a discount and reduction in plastic packaging sometimes.
- D. Source toothpaste and deodorant made in jars or made locally.
- E. Make a kit that you keep with you that includes: to go containers, cloth napkins, metal/bamboo straws, glass or metal water bottles, and wooden or metal utensils. This can prevent the use of many convenient single use plastics (to go containers).
- F. Put Asheville GreenWork's "Hard 2 Recycle" events on your calendar and save the batteries, toothbrushes, electronics, etc. that would otherwise be thrown away and take them to these events instead. These events occur every two to three months throughout the year:
<https://www.ashevillegreenworks.org/hard-2-recycle.html>.

III. Resources and Products:

- A. Terracycle! A business that will recycle toothpaste containers, toothbrushes, medical biohazard waste, potato chip bags, and more! <https://www.terracycle.com>
- B. Recycle your mascara wands to help save wildlife caught in oil spills, or to clean flea eggs out of rescued wild animals' fur:
<https://www.appalachianwild.org/wands-for-wildlife.html>.
- C. Use silk floss instead of plastic, such as that offered here:
<https://wowelifestyle.com>
- D. You can recycle grocery bags, bread bags, and frozen food bags at your local Ingles store.
- E. Asheville Dragonfly is a locally owned business producing sustainable and re-useable products made by Jess Fager:
<https://www.etsy.com/shop/AshevilleDragonfly>
- F. Utilize clothing brands that use recycled plastics: <https://mountinspiration.com>, <http://recoverbrands.com/pages/mens>, and more.
- G. Glass tupperware.
- H. Silicone bags instead of plastic.
- I. Beeswax wraps instead of plastic wrap.
- J. Glass or metal water bottles.
- K. Refillable pens and pencils.

L. Jute, twine, or rubber bands instead of plastic tape.

IV. Movies and documentaries mentioned during the brainstorm:

A. "Plastic China" - 2016 documentary

B. "One Strange Rock" - Netflix special by Will Smith