

Environmental Stewardship and the Elimination of Plastics



We are at a critical time in the history of humanity: the lifestyle choices we each make can determine the quality of life—and the possibility of survival—for all living beings like never before. It can be overwhelming trying to know what to do! We can start by considering the choices we make, in all facets of our lives, to be the most conscientious decisions possible. Here are some examples:

- How am I organizing myself and my life every day for Life's sake?
- Why do I use straws?
- Why own a car?
- Why buy this thing?
- What tools, etc. might be shared in our community?

Along the same line, Alice Waters suggests some questions to reflect on:

- How are we supposed to live our life?
- How should we eat?
- How do the choices we make about food affect our sister and fellow humans?
- How do the choices we make affect the land we live on?
- Where does our food come from?
- What are the consequences of the decisions we make about the food we eat every day?

Basically, the suggestion/request/plea is to reconnect to the environment that sustains life and the living beings we share it with—human *and* more-than human...



Here are some practices and resources that are in use by some of our LATs and Katie:

- Take shorter showers and be mindful when you turn on a faucet (example: after wetting your toothbrush, turn the faucet off until you're ready to rinse)
- Don't flush the toilet every time you pee
- Plan and map errands so as to use less fuel—or better yet, ride a bike or walk when possible (use panniers on your bike rack—they can be grocery bag size; take a backpack to carry heavier items you purchase)
- Carpool whenever possible
- Make your own fresh food and other products instead of buying things in plastic packages or non-recyclable containers (recipes on-line include skin and hair products, toothpaste, and even pet food!)—or buy only things in glass or other recyclable containers (i.e., Eco-dent dental floss comes in a paperboard box instead of a plastic container)
- Read product labels in the same way you read food labels and don't buy products with harmful ingredients or packaging
- Be cautious of "bio-based" and "earth-friendly" labeling—it's often a green washing tactic
- Become familiar with the recycling protocol in your area—many counties have different abilities to process items and if you put something in the bin that isn't recyclable you can contaminate the whole batch of recyclables. Don't rely on the recycling center to do this for you! Claim your responsibility.

*I RECONNECT,
RELISH &
RE-COMMIT
TO ALL THAT
SUSTAIN LIFE*



Eliminate use of plastic baggies and plastic wrap by choosing alternatives

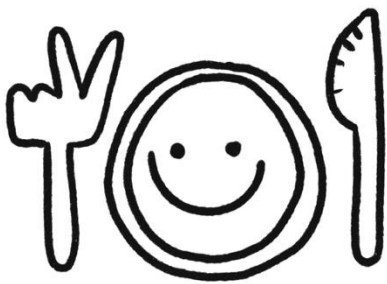
- Bees wrap—a malleable wrap made from beeswax, available on Amazon
- Wax paper biodegradable bags can replace Ziplock-style bags
- Biobag (completely compostable resealable bags)
- Always carry reusable bags in your car for shopping—if you forget them when you walk in the store, make yourself go back to the car before you purchase items (commit and recommit to using reusable bags)
- Use easily composted bags. Example: UNNI ASTM D6400 100% Compostable Bags, 13 Gallon, 50 Count, Heavy Duty 0.85 Mils, Tall Kitchen Trash Bags, Food Scrap Yard Waste Bags, available from [Amazon](#)
- When placing orders, specify no plastic in shipping, and if it shows up in plastic take a picture and send it to the store/merchant explaining why you won't be ordering anything else from them.



Take-out containers for food and coffee

- When ordering food “to go” have it served on plates, and then put it in your own reusable containers
- Use small glass mason jars as a travel mug for hot drinks in the car

- Take reusable containers with you everywhere, even when you travel. Use this phrase: “No plastic.” Collapsible silicone food storage containers that fit well in a bag or purse are available on Amazon
- Compost everything possible, including labeled to-go containers instead of sending them to the landfill; become a worm farmer

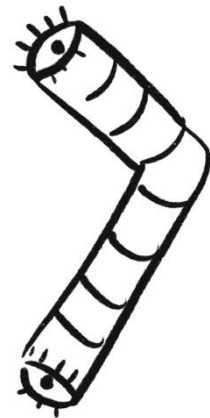


Utensils

- Use bamboo utensils or another re-usable, portable set of utensils—carry them with you always

Straws

- Metal
- Glass straws: <https://www.strawesome.com>
- None—specify “no straw” when ordering drinks
- Kickstarter called Final Straw: <https://finalstraw.com/>
- If your kid loves straws, keep a foldable one on a key chain (that way it’s available at all times)



Produce bags

- Shop at a local farmers' market and get as much produce there as possible
- 3-packs of net bags from <https://www.3bbags.com/> (tip: put a damp dishtowel on top to keep the moisture in greens)
- Buy local whenever, wherever possible & take your own bags, cotton, flax, etc.
- Flax bags sold at the Ojai, CA farmers' market are amazing for storing produce (www.ambrosiabag.com)
- Buy in bulk and when you do, take your cotton bags with you to put the bulk items in
- Store your bulk food in glass jars (Ball, etc.); reuse glass jars from prepared foods instead of recycling or sending them to the landfill
- Buy bread from a local baker
- Grow at least some of your own food—it tastes *so* great and has the most benefit to you fresh (plus, appreciate those highly intelligent plant relatives for being so smart that they make their own food and medicine directly from SunLight!!!)



Cleaning supplies

- [Supernatural cleaning products](#)—created by our very own Suzy Batiz!

Clothing

- Micro-fibers from washing clothes end up in our waterways and oceans. Some are biodegradable, like cotton. Others are plastic and stay forever.
- Here's [a fabulous 2.5-minute video about microfibers](#), from a fabulous organization, [The Story of Stuff](#).
- [Rothy's.com](#) for washable shoes made out of recycled plastic
- Three hacks for eliminating micro-fibers from entering the watershed:
 1. [Cora Ball](#)
 2. [Guppy Friend](#) washing bag (also sold at [Patagonia](#))
 3. Install a [filter](#) in your [washing machine](#)
- Biodegradable clothes! Yes!
- [Be a More Ethical Consumer](#)

Packaging Materials

- Ask folks you order from to use eco shipping materials and reuse all those materials for as long as possible
- Ask folks you buy from to either not package items or to package as little as possible and use eco packaging materials



To Compost or Not to Compost?

Food scraps and yard waste will happily decompose in your backyard composter. Most commercial compostable products are genuinely compostable *only* in a commercial or industrial composting facility, but try it out for yourself, one at a time, to see.

Boulder Eco-Cycle, a long-time leader in community composting programs, advises that three labels are currently reliable indicators that a product is genuinely compostable in a commercial or industrial composting facility:

- "BPI" or "Compostable Biodegradable Products Institute /US Composting Council"
- "NatureWorks LLC"
- "Ingeo"

If a "compostable" to-go spoon or fork isn't imprinted with one of these labels, consider it landfill— unless you've looked the specific product up in the [BPI database](#) and found that it's certified compostable.



Get Political

- Sort the files A LOT with regard to this (sorting the files is checking in with “things I can control” and “things I can’t control”)
- Write letters to local places
- Don’t support fracking! (It contributes to inexpensive plastic production)

- [Center for Hard to Recycle Materials](#). Here's a link in case you want to promote this in your own community.

Resources

- [Tips to reduce plastic](#)
- [Guide to living plastic-free](#)
- Compostable product labels to determine if that fork you're looking at goes into the landfill or can be composted: products.bpiworld.org
- [The Pachamama Alliance](#)— raising awareness of how the dream of our modern world has unintended consequences affecting social justice, environmental degradation, and disconnection from our earth and each other; lots of blogs with positive solutions to change the dream.
- [The Story of Stuff](#)— lots of videos about how plastics, microfibers, single-use bottles, and our throw-away society is impacting not only the environment, but also many cultures:
- Julia Butterfly Hill's speech "[Where is Away?](#)"
- [Zero Waste](#)—ready to get radical and go all the way? [Try this 31-day challenge](#).

A Friendly Tip for Creating Change

It's easy to get overwhelmed by the choices and information available. Start small, make one change at a time as you become more knowledgeable about practices that are kinder to the earth and other living things. Give some love to your "analyzer" persona...underneath the words, he/she/they may be protecting you from "making a mistake" or "getting it wrong." Give some love scoops and celebrate going deep!

An Earthly Personal Ad

*Beautiful planet seeks compatible humans
for long-term, committed relationship*

Me:

4.5 billion years old (but look younger)

Strikingly beautiful and very well endowed

Highly evolved, intelligent, and accomplished

Head of a large, extended family

Very generous and giving, but don't want to be taken advantage of

Seeking a committed but not exclusive relationship

You:

Enjoy forests, mountains, oceans, and diverse plants and animals

Very willing to listen and learn (including from "other" life forms)

More interested in the common good than material wealth

Ready for a long-term, committed partnership based on deep love & mutual respect

Interested? Let's connect!

From *Poems of Earth and Spirit: 70 Poems and 40 Practices to Deepen
Your Connection with Nature* by Kai Siedenburg

<http://ournatureconnection.com/writings/poems-earth-spirit-book/>