

## Being Green at the Supermarket

“Your World” article submission for July 23, 2007

Grocery shopping entails countless decisions that can have substantial environmental impacts. You can easily minimize your impact by making small changes during trips to the supermarket. And, the good news is that your green grocery shopping endeavors will likely result in saving you some green!

**Reuse old grocery bags or bring cloth bags.** Each year, an estimated 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic grocery bags are consumed worldwide. That is 1 million plastic bags each minute. According to the EPA, less than 1% of those bags are recycled and more than 380 billion are thrown away. By reusing grocery bags, you are preventing yourself from contributing to associated environmental hazards, such as clogging landfills, creating litter and harming marine wildlife. Several supermarkets in Washtenaw County even take \$.10 off your grocery bill for every bag you reuse!

To recycle plastic grocery bags, please bring them to the Ann Arbor Drop-Off Station (734.971.7400), or ask your local dry cleaner if they accept them.

**Look for products with less packaging or buy bulk.** The less packaging on a product, the less energy was spent to make the product and less waste is produced after usage. You can reduce your energy and waste contribution by, instead of buying small, individual packages of yogurt, applesauce, juice, etc., purchase one large container. Or, instead of purchasing individual bottles of water, purchase a refillable gallon jug. You can always distribute the product in smaller cups, bowls or tupperware containers at home. Purchasing larger containers will cost less, too.

Also, several supermarkets in Washtenaw County sell in bulk. So, next time you need spices, coffee, oatmeal or beans, bring your own container – used boxes or jars - and buy these supplies in bulk. This also allows you to choose just as much as you need and will cost a fraction of the price.

**Purchase recyclable containers.** Only #1 and #2 plastic bottles are recyclable within Washtenaw County. So, if you are ever faced with having to choose between multiple plastic bottles, be sure to purchase the recyclable type when possible. Just remember to discard the bottle caps beforehand, as they are not recyclable. Also, remember that cardboard, egg and milk cartons and glass are all recyclable, too.

**Purchase recycled aluminum foil** instead of regular aluminum foil or plastic wrap. The former uses approximately 1/20<sup>th</sup> the energy. Just look for aluminum foil labeled as such, or ask a store employee if you need help.

For more information about green grocery shopping, please call 734.222.6874.

Submitted by:

Noelle Bowman, Solid Waste Program Assistant  
Washtenaw County Department of Planning & Environment

Phone: 734-222-6874

Email: [bowmann@ewashtenaw.org](mailto:bowmann@ewashtenaw.org)

Website: <http://recycle.ewashtenaw.org>