



Reducing Your Plastic Footprint

By Jess Georges, Green Road Refill
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Have you ever followed your plastic footprint throughout your day? Try it! Take that first step out of your bed, look around your room, and play “eye spy” the plastic. Chances are you’ve encountered many forms of plastic within the first 15 minutes of waking. By the end of the day, you’ve likely encountered it thousands of times.

The very first synthetic polymer was invented in 1869 as an alternative to ivory and came with a \$10,000 prize to its inventor, John Wesley Hyatt. It wasn’t until after WWII that plastics became the material we are so familiar with today. Plastics aren't ALL bad right? They have aided countless innovations in technology, medicine, and, of course, take the form of everyday products from toys, furniture, and toothbrushes, to items like water bottles, ziplock bags, and takeout cutlery. It’s those single-use products that we either throw away - or think, “I’ll just recycle it” - that have gotten us into trouble. While many agree that our society values convenience over sustainability, I feel there needs to be a shift in that value and it’s encouraging that for many of us on the Cape it already has.

You may have heard that plastic waste in our environment is making waves - literally. Plastics are making their way from the microcosm of our own beaches here on Cape Cod to the macrocosm of The Great Pacific Garbage Patch off the coast of California. While plastics eventually do break down into microplastics, they never biodegrade so our oceans and marine life are suffering that consequence. After many years of pushing the urgency of our plastic problem, environmental organizations, activists, and scientists now have the ear of the media. The first big mainstream eye opener was *National Geographic’s* 2018 issue titled “Planet or Plastic?” Since then, features on *CBS’s 60 Minutes*, various radio programs, podcasts, and magazine articles have been exposing plastic waste and bringing this big problem to the surface of our collective consciousness.

It is my belief that all things on earth are interconnected, thus we have a responsibility to be stewards and take care of our environment. Now, you may be thinking, “Great! I already have a heaping portion of climate change worries on my plate, now another piece of environmental anxiety as a side dish?!” Well, yes, you could look at it that way. But what I am suggesting is to transform any dread into hope and use that hope to propel you into taking action.

I feel that we, both citizens and consumers, can use our purchasing power to make a difference in the health of our planet. The municipal single use plastic bans, *Skip the Straw*, and *Zero Waste* movements, are examples of how we can work on a personal and local level to foster positive change - it’s really up to us! Use that hope to propel yourselves into taking action.

My own worries about our blue planet, and the burden that is to be handed over to my children's generation, led me to start my own business. In May of 2018, I launched Green Road Refill, a low to zero-waste refill shop dedicated to reducing Cape Cod's plastic footprint. Six years ago I started selling green goods out of a retired school bus at farmers markets and festivals throughout the Cape, and today our shop, located in the Cumby's Plaza across the street from the Brewster Book Store, just celebrated its second year anniversary! We refill over 40 plant-based products and offer plastic-free alternatives for your home and body. From compostable zip lock bags to bamboo toothbrushes, small changes can be easy to make and we want to encourage our customers that every little change can make a difference. We encourage our refillers to set an example and emphasize that it is important to focus on progress over perfection.

At Green Road Refill our mission is refilling bottles to reduce plastic but we also care about what we're putting inside those bottles. Our products are biodegradable, plant-based, as well as phosphate, paraben, sulfate, and petroleum sulfate free. This means they are good for you and our delicate Cape Cod aquifer. I hope that you consider reducing your plastic footprint in the new year, and perhaps even hop on the Green Road too! For more ideas on how to reduce, please check out our "Take Action" page on our website <https://www.greenroadrefill.com/>.