

Re-usable bags are convenient

Reusable bags made from cotton or other materials are the most environmentally-friendly option. There are a variety of types of bags out there, and all can be easily stored in your car—or sometimes even a purse—for spur-of-the-moment shopping needs.

Stores that soon will or currently sell reusable bags include:

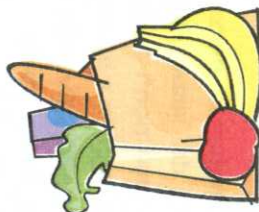
- Stevens Point Association of Downtown Businesses members
- Walgreens
- Roundy's
- County Market
- The Stevens Point Area Co-Op.



Portage County Solid Waste
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600 Moore Road
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Paper, Plastic ...or Neither?



"Nothing in nature is exhausted in its first use"

- Ralph Waldo Emerson



Make a difference — one bag at a time

At the store, you often have the choice of what type of bag to use. Both paper and plastic bags are bad for the environment.



Paper bags lead to deforestation and take up more space in landfills.

Plastic bags are made from the waste products of oil refining. They take up less space in a landfill, but they also take up to 1,000 years to decompose. They break up into particles that could contaminate soil and water.

Most plastic bags do not make it to a landfill. They are light and easily capture air. They go airborne and get caught in fences, trees, gutters and sewers, waterways and more.

Therefore, when asked what bag you want, the best choice is neither—use a reusable bag!

Plastic bag use is a global problem

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, more than 380 billion plastic bags are used in the United States every year. That's more than a billion a day. It is estimated this costs retailers about \$4 billion a year, which in the long run, hurts customers at the check-out line.

World-wide, the numbers are even more shocking: experts say people use and dispose of anywhere from 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags a year — more than a million a minute. Other estimates put the global amount at closer to 3 or 4 trillion bags.

It is estimated 100,000 marine mammals die each year because of plastic litter in our ocean in the North Pacific. Bags can also harm land animals like cows.

They can also cause health problems for humans. For example, officials in Bangladesh determined that bags blocked drainage during the 1988 and 1998 floods. Two-thirds of the country was submerged in water because of this, and stagnant, standing water can lead to a variety of health hazards. Bangladesh banned the use of all plastic bags, while other countries have imposed a surcharge fee.



Ways to reduce and re-use

- Re-use paper or plastic bags as garbage bags for your home or car.
- Reduce the number of bags you use — when at the store, do you really need a bag to carry one or two items?
- Bring in bags to places that accept them for reuse or recycling. Locations include Dime and Dollar, Discount, Dollar Discount, Nice as New, and Walmart. Check with your grocery store to see if they do. Make sure the place you bring them actually recycles, and doesn't just ship large amounts of bags to the landfills.
- Plastic bags can be recycled several times before they are no longer viable materials. They can be used to make a variety of things, including mouse pads and doormats. In addition, when they are recycled, they are re-melted. This sterilizes them; therefore, the plastic can be used to make hospital-grade products.

