



## COMPOSTABLE PLASTIC DOES IT WORK IN PORTLAND?

**N**ew containers that look like conventional plastics but are labeled "biodegradable," "compostable" or "Polylactic Acid (PLA)" have been appearing in delis, grocery stores, and fast food restaurants. As well-meaning businesses work to green their practices, many are turning to these new (usually corn-based) products, called "bioplastics."

In Portland, bioplastics present a problem for the local recycling and composting industries. Bioplastics often look like regular plastics, making it difficult for consumers to distinguish between the two materials. When bioplastics end up in the recycling stream, they can cause expensive problems for plastics recycling.

### Be a thoughtful consumer!

- Watch for containers and bags labeled compostable, biodegradable or PLA.
- Keep bioplastic containers **OUT** of curbside recycling and yard debris roll carts and other plastics recycling programs. Mixing these materials together causes problems for conventional plastics and yard debris processors.
- If you do end up with a bioplastics container, dispose of it with your trash. Compostable plastics do not break down in home composting systems and may not be suitable for commercial composting facilities.
- Whenever possible, opt out of disposable containers. Carry a durable coffee mug or water bottle to help reduce waste.
- Purchase locally made foods or grow your own produce to avoid the need for packaging for transportation and storage.





## Are bioplastics better for the environment than petroleum-based plastics?

As eco-conscious consumers, it is important to weigh potential gains against new problems the material may cause, and to consider whether the stated benefits are real. Does the switch save or use more natural resources and energy? Does it reduce or increase the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change?

### Consider the following issues:

- **Landfill decomposition increases greenhouse gas emissions.** When biodegradable materials break down in a landfill, they create methane, a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Some landfill facilities are turning methane into energy, but the current technology is only able to capture a small amount of the methane produced.
- **Consumers have limited ability to compost bioplastic containers.** Home compost does not reach the temperatures necessary to break down bioplastic. In order for bioplastics to decompose, they must be sent to a commercial composting facility.
- **Bioplastics may not decompose.** Not all bioplastic products have been tested for commercial composting. Some of the bioplastics that have been tested were found to successfully decompose in a commercial compost facility; others did not decompose.
- **Pollution in oceans is an issue.** Oceans do not reach the temperatures necessary to break down bioplastics. As bioplastic debris collects in oceans and waterways, it creates pollution.
- **Bioplastics require fossil fuels for production.** Corn-based plastics will not remove the need for petroleum to make the container. Corn production requires soil management machinery, fertilizers and pesticides, all of which are petroleum intensive. Converting the corn to bioplastics often uses fossil fuels.
- **Fertile land is used for packaging.** Six billion people depend on 11 percent of the earth's land surface to produce food. Shifting land use to produce packaging could further increase the world's hunger problems.

Think outside of the disposable box!  
**Carry your own reusable mugs and bottles when you go out.**



City of Portland Bureau of  
**Planning and Sustainability**  
Sam Adams, Mayor | Susan Anderson, Director



## Matasar, Emily

---

**From:** Kelly Bryan [kellyb@spiritone.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, July 24, 2009 11:10 AM  
**To:** Matasar, Emily  
**Subject:** Re: Address city council on Wednesday, August 5, 2009, at 9:30 am

Thank you so much, Emily. I will be there!

Kelly

On Jul 24, 2009, at 10:39 AM, Matasar, Emily wrote:

> Kelly --

>

> I got your voicemail yesterday. I'm writing to confirm your  
> Communication to City Council scheduled for Wednesday, August 5, 2009,  
> at 9:30 am. For your information, Commissioner Leonard is scheduled  
> to be absent for that meeting and the following meeting on August 12,  
> 2009. If you need to cancel, try to let us know by Thursday, July 30,  
> 2009 (the agenda is published on the Friday before the meeting). Let  
> me know if you need anything else.

>

> Thanks,  
> Emily

>

>

> Information about Communications:

> \* You will have three minutes to address the Council and may also  
> submit written material (please provide seven copies to the Clerk).

> \* The meeting takes place at City Hall, 1221 SW 4th Ave., 2nd Floor,  
> Council Chambers.

> \* Council starts at 9:30 am and Communications are first on the  
> agenda.

> \* Please note: Communications allow the Council to hear issues that  
> interest our citizens, but do not necessarily allow an opportunity for  
> dialogue.

>

>

> Emily Matasar  
> Deputy Auditor  
> (503) 823-3560

> -----Original Message-----

> From: kellyb@spiritone.com [mailto:kellyb@spiritone.com]

> Sent: Monday, June 01, 2009 6:06 PM

> To: Matasar, Emily

> Subject: RE: Address city council on July 15

>

> Thanks, Emily,

>

> July 22 would be great.

>

> Cheers,

>

> Kelly Bryan

>

> Matasar, Emily wrote:

>

>> Kelly -

>>

>> Unfortunately all of the Communications slots for the July 15, 2009  
>> City Council Meeting are currently filled. Would you like to speak  
>> on July 22 instead? I have you penciled in for July 22 but please



- 1080

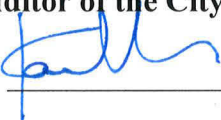
Request of Kelly M. Bryan to address Council regarding City ban or mandatory fee  
on single-use plastic bags (Communication)

AUG 05 2009

PLACED ON FILE

Filed JUL 31 2009

**LaVonne Griffin-Valade**  
Auditor of the City of Portland

By 

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Leonard		
Adams		