



Plastic Pot Problems and How to Help!

What can we as gardeners do to help minimize the use of plastic pots in our gardening efforts? As gardeners, we have a responsibility to protect and preserve our environment. The use of plastics in all aspects of life has created a large and negative impact on our world. Many plastics, including most plant pots, are not recyclable. Many are toxic as they leach micro plastics and chemicals into the environment. Additionally, they are made from crude oil which is a nonrenewable resource.

What is a gardener to do? Here are some ways to minimize the use of plastic pots when practical.

Reduce- The most effective way to help with the plastic pot issue is to avoid purchasing them! That is a challenge since many of our plants are sold in plastic. Some nurseries use alternatives like peat pot, cow dung pots, coir, bamboo, coconut and rice pots. When possible, purchase plants in those pots. Ask your local nurseries to supply plants with these safe alternatives. Raise awareness by advocating.

If you start your own seeds, make pots out of newspaper, egg cartons, soil block makers (on Amazon) or purchase environmentally friendly non plastic pots. Consider growing hydroponically without pots!

Reuse- The Amherst Garden Club is really good at reusing! We do a great job of reusing pots at our plant sales and this type of initiative really helps. Most pots only last a couple years so reusing can be only a partial solution. In your own gardens, reuse plastic pots as much as possible. Donate them to the plant sale! Some of the large box stores (Lowes) will accept plastic pots of many sizes and trays. They have special recycling places that can handle recycling plastic pots.

Recycle- This is the most difficult avenue for plastic pots. Many pots are just not recyclable. Number 1 PETE and #2 HDPE, #5 and #6 are likely the best candidates. Do not put them into single stream recycling as they cannot be used and will ruin an entire batch! The only recyclable pots are ones that are very clean, not black, and are the correct number that your transfer station accepts.

How else can I help?

The Association of Professional Landscape Designers has launched an initiative to educate and raise awareness about the use and dangers of plastic pots in the gardening industry. They have an excellent website- healthypotshealthyplanet.org. On this site, it is very easy to add your name to a coalition of people who care! If enough people join, change can happen. It is free and easy to do on this website.

By employing eco-friendly strategies, we can significantly reduce or eliminate the use of plastic pots in our gardening practices. From choosing biodegradable alternatives to repurposing and upcycling, there are numerous ways to promote sustainability. By embracing these practices, we can cultivate not only beautiful gardens but also a greener future!

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