

just the facts



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Plastics

WHAT ARE THEY?

Plastics are synthetic materials made from hydrocarbons found in oil and natural gas. Small molecules, called monomers, are bonded into chains called polymers. Plastic is light, easily shaped and durable.

Plastic is used for packaging, in cars, as bags, in hospitals, for toys and in computers.

WHAT PLASTICS CAN YOU RECYCLE?

Plastic bottles with the codes 1 and 2 on the bottom have the strongest markets for recycling and are collected in municipal programs. Beverage containers are recycled when:

- non-alcoholic bottles are returned for refund to return-it depots, through school programs, or to local grocers
- alcoholic beverage containers are returned for refund to liquor distribution centres.

QUICK FACTS

25% is how much thinner soft drink bottles are since 1977.

10 soft drink bottles are required to make the fibrefill for one ski jacket.

40 plastic bottles make one square metre of carpeting.

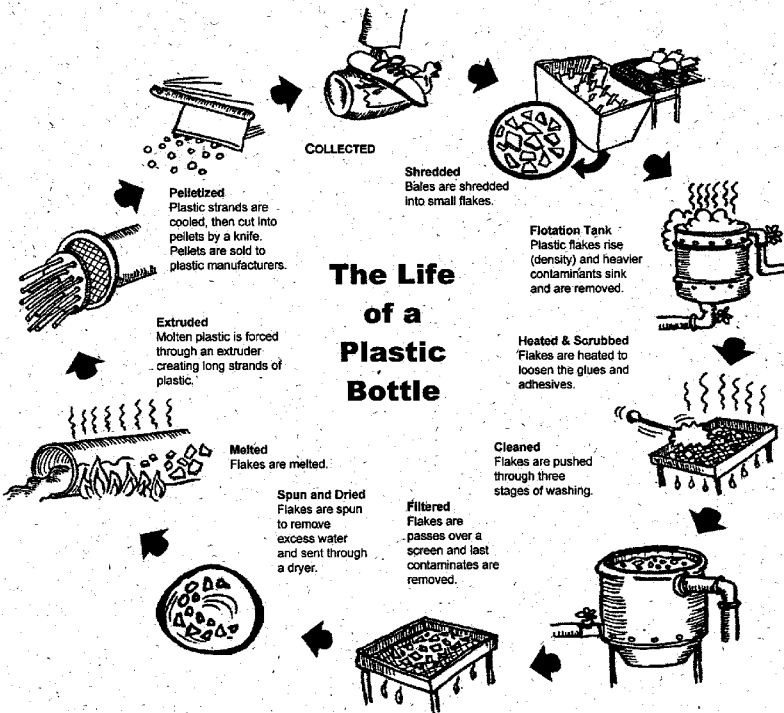
50% of all polyester carpet made in the U.S. is made from recycled beverage containers.

20% - 40% recycled content is common in plastic bottles for shampoo, skin care or laundry soap.

40 soft drink bottles are needed to make the recycled fibrefill of one sleeping bag.

27,000 tonnes of plastic were recycled by GVRD residents and businesses in 1999.

1 billion pounds of plastics are landfilled each year as discarded electronics.



just the facts



WHAT ARE PLASTICS RECYCLED INTO?

Containers have their type of plastic stamped on the bottom.

		TYPICAL PRODUCTS	RECYCLED PRODUCTS
	Polyethylene Terephthalate Clear and tough with the ability to contain carbon dioxide. Most commonly recycled plastic in North America.	Soft drink bottles Peanut butter jars Liquor bottles	Pullover sweatshirts Pillow stuffing Carpet backing
	High Density Polyethylene Excellent protective qualities and very strong. Second most recycled plastic in North America.	Milk or juice jugs Motor oils Shampoo or bleach bottles	Plastic lumber Blue boxes & compost bins Consumer bottles
	Polyvinyl Chloride Clear. Extensive use in construction industry.	Wrapping for meat Water bottles Siding, doors, frames	Drainage pipes Cable insulation
	Low Density Polyethylene Flexible and strong. Most commonly used in flexible plastic film.	Bread bags Milk pouches Grocery bags	Plastic lumber (playgrounds) Compost bins
	Polypropylene Strong with a high melting point. Good for packaging 'hot-filled' products.	Syrup and ketchup bottles Appliance parts Luggage	Ice scrapers Industrial packing cases Automotive battery cases
	Polystyrene Clear, can be 'foamed' and provides excellent insulation and protection.	Foam cups Compact disk cases Filler in concrete forms	Cassette & CD cases Office accessories
	Other Includes other resins, composites and laminates.	Safety glasses Automotive tail lights	Picnic tables Outdoor signs

WHAT ARE CONTAMINANTS?

Contaminants include paper, glass, metal, residues of previous contents, sand and unacceptable plastics. These contaminants can result in high maintenance costs, poor quality pellets and increased waste.

WHERE ARE PLASTICS PROCESSED?

There are approximately 100 plastic recycling plants in Canada. Merlin Plastics Supply Inc., located in Delta, is the main plastic processor in British Columbia. ENVI Plastics Lumber Inc., also in the Lower Mainland, manufactures plastic lumber from recycled plastic.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF RECYCLED PLASTICS?

Recycled plastic pellets compete on the open market with plastic made from raw resources. When the price of oil fluctuates, so too does the price of raw plastic. California and Oregon have recycled content legislation and are key markets for recycled plastic. It is important to purchase products that ensure end markets for recycled plastic.

Generally, the value of the plastic of 100 1-litre plastic pop bottles returned for recycling is the same value of one 1-litre bottle full of pop and back on the grocery shelf.

Tips.....

REDUCE

Use a reusable shopping bag or carrier.

- Resist putting all the fruits and vegetables into separate plastic bags.
- Purchase products with little or no packaging.

REUSE

Choose packaging that can be reused or recycled.

Reuse plastic containers for litterless lunches.

Organize office supplies, hardware or knick-knacks in reused plastic containers.

RECYCLE

Leave labels on. Remove all caps.

Flatten milk jugs.

Sources

American Plastics Council

Canadian Plastics Industry

Merlin Plastics

EPIC website

Business Week, June 12, 2000

RECYCLING QUESTIONS?

call the
B.C. Recycling Hotline
at (604) 732 9253
or 1 800 667 4321

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