

## **Sustainable Verona Highlights Harms of Single-Use Plastic**

Plastic has made our lives easier in many ways, but because it doesn't break down easily it has created far-reaching—and long-lasting—environmental and public health issues. It starts with production, with plastic manufacturing [using about 4% of the world's fossil fuels](#) for raw material and an equal amount to supply the energy needed for manufacturing.

About [half all plastic](#) is produced for single-use applications. That includes things like plastic bags, soda and water bottles, straws, coffee cups, cling wrap, utensils, and food packaging. To give you an idea of how widespread these products are, [roughly 1 million plastic bottles](#) are bought around the world *every minute* and [more than 500 million straws](#) are used *each day* in the United States alone.

In addition, the ubiquity of plastic products—it is likely that the amount of plastic manufactured in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century [meets or exceeds](#) the amount produced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century—has created problems with debris in all parts of the world, including some of the most remote.

Of particular concern is the amount that ends up in the oceans, where birds, fish, turtles, and marine mammals can become entangled in plastic garbage or consume plastic fragments, leading to suffocation or poisoning.

The chemicals found in plastics can also end up in the food chain or water supply, with [some evidence](#) suggesting that they are affecting human and animal health.

### **What Can Be Done?**

Recycling helps lessen the impact of using plastics, but it is costly and many items tossed in recycling bins eventually end up being downcycled—turned into lower-quality plastic items that will end up in landfills anyway. So the best way to mitigate the harms associated with plastic—and single-use plastic in particular—is to avoid using it. Here are some tips:

- Bring reusable bags and/or decline plastic bags when you shop
- Carry reusable water bottles and coffee cups and avoid buying bottled beverages
- Avoid prepackaged fruits, vegetables, and other foods wrapped in plastic
- Decline straws for your beverages or carry reusable ones
- Turn down plastic utensils
- When wrapping up leftovers, opt for reusable, sealable containers and avoid using plastic wrap
- Avoid sandwich baggies

With these simple steps, we can begin to fix the problems caused by single-use plastics.



Verona is a Sustainable Jersey certified community