















Waterwise Tips

The terrible drought experienced in a number of provinces has led to remarkable innovation by those affected by it. Those of us with access to filtered water may want to note the information below on the reuse of plastic containers.

Plastic Resin Identification Codes

 PETE	 HDPE	 PVC	 LDPE	 PP	 PS	 OTHER
Polyethylene Terephthalate	High-Density Polyethylene	Polyvinyl Chloride	Low-Density Polyethylene	Polypropylene	Polystyrene	Other
<p>Common products: soda & water bottles; cups, jars, trays, clamshells</p> <p>Recycled products: clothing, carpet, clamshells, soda & water bottles</p>	<p>Common products: milk jugs, detergent & shampoo bottles, flower pots, grocery bags</p> <p>Recycled products: detergent bottles, flower pots, crates, pipe, decking</p>	<p>Common products: cleaning supply jugs, pool liners, twine, sheeting, automotive product bottles, sheeting</p> <p>Recycled products: pipe, wall siding, binders, carpet backing, flooring</p>	<p>Common products: bread bags, paper towels & tissue overwrap, squeeze bottles, trash bags, six-pack rings</p> <p>Recycled products: trash bags, plastic lumber, furniture, shipping envelopes, compost bins</p>	<p>Common products: yogurt tubs, cups, juice bottles, straws, hangers, sand & shipping bags</p> <p>Recycled products: paint cans, speed bumps, auto parts, food containers, hangers, plant pots, razor handles</p>	<p>Common products: to-go containers & flatware, hot cups, razors, CD cases, shipping cushion, cartons, trays</p> <p>Recycled products: picture frames, crown molding, rulers, flower pots, hangers, toys, tape dispensers</p>	<p>Common types & products: polycarbonate, nylon, ABS, acrylic, PLA; bottles, safety glasses, CDs, headlight lenses</p> <p>Recycled products: electronic housings, auto parts,</p>
						

You aren't supposed to reuse the plastic bottles that water and soda come in. These bottles, which typically have a plastic identification code (PIC) of 1, are usually made from a plastic called polyethylene terephthalate, PET, or PETE. PET can be difficult to clean and is somewhat porous. Bacteria can easily grow on the surface of PET containers, especially after it is covered with film from our lips and backwash. While PET is rather durable, it can begin to degrade, particularly after being exposed to heat, sunlight, or prolonged use.

Furthermore, chemicals that are used in producing plastics can migrate into foods or liquids during use. Some types of plastic (PIC #3, #6, and #7) are more likely to release harmful chemicals, while others (#2, #4, and #5) are more durable and able to stand up to repeated use. When used correctly, the amount of chemicals that leach from any plastic is minimal. However, when plastics are used incorrectly, higher levels of chemicals can be released.

That said, it is the appropriate use of plastic containers that I want to focus on. Generally, safe, reusable plastic containers should have a #2, #4 or #5. Recycle these containers when the plastic cracks, scuffs, scratches, or becomes cloudy or discoloured. These containers are not designed to last forever and need to be replaced over time. Finally, avoid exposing these containers to excessive heat or sunlight.