

# **Making Ripples**

## **Phase Out Plastic Bags**

by Amanda Bancroft

In the final frontier of green living, there are always unexplored galaxies. Last night, I had just fallen asleep when the theme song to Star Trek blasted through the ceiling from the apartment upstairs. My dad and I used to watch Star Trek when I was a kid, but we were a Ziplock family and I grew up knowing more about Spock than how to store food without waste.

My first goal is to completely eliminate the need for new plastic baggies in the kitchen. Instead of using a Star Trek phaser on them, I'll just phase them out gradually. Reusing older baggies is ok, and preferable to throwing them away. Some people wash out large ziplock bags to freeze homegrown produce or to use them over and over again. However, it's not sustainable to use new plastic bags for every purchase in the bulk aisle at Ozark Natural Foods.

For those who have yet to explore this frontier of food, here's a brief introduction: the bulk aisle contains large bins of snacks, nut butters, baking ingredients, rice, tea, coffee, and more. You can purchase a reusable container, use your own containers once weighed and marked, or grab a plastic bag and fill 'er up. Guess what we usually do?

Since we acquired the plastic bag habit, we've also acquired over two hundred plastic baggies. Every time I turn around, there are more of them – on the desk, the counters, the drawers, the pantry shelves...they're like rabbits! Our baggy bunnies have overpopulated the kitchen. Today's grocery list contains a spice, cumin, which we buy in the bulk aisle...in little plastic baggies! This time, the cumin ain't comin' in if it's inside a baggy. Here's how I've reduced hundreds of plastic baggies to less than a dozen:

1. Instead of grabbing plastic baggies, purchase glass spice containers.
2. On a bike? Carpool with a friend when you need to refill heavy bulk containers.
3. Use mason jars for food storage, cloth bags for bulk tea, lightweight Asian takeout containers for hiking snacks, and bento boxes for sandwiches.
4. For fresh produce, try reusable produce bags.
5. Don't store your old plastic baggies alongside catnip, or your cats will eat them!
6. Ripples has tips for finding free mason jars, and craft ideas for excess baggies.

I only focused on tiny bulk baggies overpopulating the kitchen, but there are other options to reduce waste. For example, we take reusable bags and backpacks with us to do our grocery shopping. If you want to make a difference and reduce waste and plastic use, check out Ripples to learn how to support Quinn Montana and sign her petition to make Fayetteville free of plastic bags!

*Ripples* is a blog connecting people to resources on sustainable living while chronicling their off-grid journey and supporting the work of non-profit organizations. Read more on this topic and others at [www.RipplesBlog.org](http://www.RipplesBlog.org)