

<http://freshorganicgardening.com/plastic-containers-as-planters-safe-or-not/>

For many urban growers, small space is a problem that limits their planting options. Due to this, they resort to using plastics in growing their food. However, there is a big concern regarding using these unnatural products when growing things for consumption.

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One of the biggest questions thrown at organic gardeners, and indeed that organic gardeners ask themselves, is this:

Do plastic containers leach chemicals into the soil that is absorbed by plants and ultimately by us?

In this article, we are going to tackle 3 important points:

SOME plastics are unsafe and they DO leach toxins
There is GOOD in re-using plastic containers as planters

You can CHOOSE what plastic to use as planters

Not All Plastics Are Harmful

container 6The general notion is that all plastics are harmful and should be avoided completely. Many times, we have encountered people saying that using plastics to grow vegetables and fruits defeats the very idea of growing naturally or organically.

Though it is true that plastic products are not natural, what will landless people use to grow their own food? They can opt to buy pots sure, but that would be spending more money – most people grow their own food to save money. And buying pots will mean more resources are ‘harvested’ from Mother Nature to make the pots.

Re-using plastic containers is cheaper and it does keep them away from landfills (one of the benefits by the way).

There are other materials that can be used of course, like wooden pallets but sometimes supplies are not always available and they don’t last very long.

Using plastic containers to grow food for your family is not all that bad – provided you know which plastics

to use. As stated, some plastics are harmful and they do leach toxins to the soil especially when they are heated or exposed to sunlight for prolonged periods of time. You will find out later on which plastic types are safe to use...

The Good In Re-Using Plastics as Planters

Plastics are kept away from landfills where they will stay in an undecomposed state for thousands of years

They can be found almost anywhere

They are cheap

They are easy to use

They last a long time

Re-using plastic containers minimizes the need to use up more resources that are sadly not being replenished

Plastics You Can Plant In

There are 7 types of plastics commercially processed and sold. The following are the kinds that are safe to use for planting.

safe

PETE or PET bottles. You see the triangle symbol with the #1 inside at the bottom of the container. This type of plastic is used for most clear beverage bottles.

HDPE (high density polyethylene). You see the triangle symbol with the #2 inside at the bottom of the container. This type of plastic is used for “cloudy” milk and water jugs, opaque food bottles.

LDPE (low density polyethylene). You see the triangle symbol with the #4 inside at the bottom of the container. This plastic is used in food storage bags and squeeze bottles.

PP (polypropylene). You see the triangle symbol with the #5 inside at the bottom of the container. This is used in rigid containers, including some baby bottles, and some cups and bowls. Examples are the wide-necked milky white containers usually used for yogurt.

Plastics You Should Never Plant In

And these are the plastics you should avoid and not

use in your garden or when growing food...

unsafe

PVC or V (polyvinyl chloride). You see the triangle symbol with the #3 inside at the bottom of the plastic. These are used in some 'soft' bottles and commercial cling wraps. Also the same plastic used for sewer lines and potable water distribution.

PS (polystyrene). The triangle symbol has a #6 inside. Examples are meat and bakery trays and Styrofoam containers. This plastic material leaches toxic chemicals when heated.

Everything else. The triangle symbol has a #7 inside. Just avoid plastics with this symbol because their origin and process are uncertain. Examples: 5-gallon water bottles, some metal can linings and believe it or not, some baby bottles.

When assembling your planters, make sure you use only plastics with numbers 1, 2, 4, and 5 as these are safer (less bad?) than the rest.