

This week on Ireland’s Classic Hits Radio we’re discussing the them of World Earth Day ‘Planet vs. Plastics’.

**5 Ways Plastic Harms the Environment**

**1. KILLS OCEAN LIFE**

By now you’ve probably heard about the mass amounts of plastic polluting oceans and other waterways. Plastic debris makes its way into oceans from rivers, shorelines, or boats. This plastic debris affects all kinds of ocean life, from sea turtles to ocean birds to sharks to fish and everything in between. Animals get tangled or stuck in discarded nets or bottles, choke on plastic debris, fill their stomachs with plastic they mistake for food, and much more. As these animals die, the ecosystems they play an essential part in begin to die with them.

**2. KILLS TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE**

Plastic also harms the environment by killing land animals.  Just like their water-dwelling counterparts, land animals haven’t evolved to deal with ocean pollution. They get tangled and choked in many of the same ways as ocean animals. Once again, this creates a ripple effect within ecosystems, and as their numbers decrease, the ecosystem weakens and shrinks.

**3. TAKES UP SPACE**

Keeping plastic debris contained is a difficult task, especially when dealing with the sheer amount of plastic waste produced daily. Around the world, humans produce 380 million tons of plastic waste annually.

**4. PRODUCES CHEMICAL POLLUTION**

Plastic also harms the environment through [pollution](https://repurpose.global/letstalktrash/how-does-plastic-cause-air-pollution/). Plastics are essentially made from oil and gas. Mining these nonrenewable resources produces harmful chemicals like benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene, carbon monoxide, hydrogen sulfide, ozone, sulfur dioxide, and many more.

With no place to store plastics, much of the world also incinerates plastic waste or attempts to recycle it. Both of these activities produce toxic chemicals into the air.

**5. CREATES MICROPLASTICS**

You’ve probably heard the phrase “plastics don’t break down.” This is partially true; plastics don’t break down like organic materials do. Organic materials, like paper, cotton, hemp and many others decompose into nontoxic substances. In a sense, plastics do break down; they break into much smaller plastic particles now known as [microplastics](https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/polluting-microplastics-harm-both-animals-and-ecosystems). These can be as large as a pebble or smaller than a single cell.

**For more information:**

[www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/plastic-pollution](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/plastic-pollution)

[www.rediscoverycentre.ie](http://www.rediscoverycentre.ie)

