ORDERING INFORMATION

- Reach out to suppliers asking about using less plastic in packaging
  - Stress the importance the YMCA places on sustainability
  - Keep in mind the YMCA is a large organization which can have a lot of influence on suppliers
- Look for new suppliers when old suppliers cannot provide satisfactory packaging
- Be aware of different plastics effect on the environments

Types of Plastic

Fossil Fuel Based Plastics

Most plastics are made from fossil fuels, contributing to climate change. Just because plastic has a recycling symbol doesn't always mean it gets recycled. End of Life recycling rates of various types of plastic in 2015 are shown below:

Polyethylene terephthalate
15.2% Recycled

High density polyethylene (HDPE)
9.0% Recycled

Low density polyethylene (LDPE)
9.0% recycled

Polystyrene
2.0% Recycled

Polypropylene
1.5% Recycled

Other resins
0.3% Recycled

Polyvinyl chloride
0.2% Recycled

NO PLASTIC IS THE BEST PLASTIC

Plant-Based Plastics (aka Bioplastics)

Are bioplastics better for the environment?

- Not necessarily
- Lower greenhouse gas emissions and less non-renewable energy use compared to traditional plastics
- However, can result in soil pollution and higher agricultural land use

What about plastics that are compostable or biodegradable?

- Some bioplastics are advertised as being commercially compostable, however the YMCA does not currently have the capability to compost, meaning these materials end up in landfills and are not composted
- Some bioplastics are advertised as being biodegradable. In reality they are only biodegradable under specific conditions. When these plastics end up in landfills, they can take a very long time to break down and even release methane, a greenhouse gas that has 23 times the affect of CO_2.

PLA (Polylactic acid)

- Plastic made from a byproduct of fermentation (typically corn)
- Debate over whether this is better or worse than traditional plastics

PSM (Plant Starch Material)

- Starch combined with a copolymer (sometimes PLA) and other additives
- Shown in some studies to be marginally better than traditional plastics

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Di, J., Reck, B. K., Miatto, A., & Graedel, T. E. (2021). United States plastics: Large flows, short lifetimes, and negligible recycling. Resources, Conservation and Recycling, 167, 105440. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2021.105440

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