

## Littering

Littering simply means throwing away objects on the ground or in the water instead of properly disposing of them in a trash container, recycling bin, or at a special waste collection event. Litter may consist of ordinary trash, appliances, electronics, furniture, and/or toxic substances and can originate from construction sites, households, industries, pedestrians, and moving vehicles.

Whether the litter is intentional or unintentional, large or small, it drastically affects the economy and environment for years to come. Here are some examples.



- Your tax dollars have been spent by Palmer Township to clean up litter and properly dispose of it.
- Places with a large amount of litter are more likely to be the site of fires and see a decrease in property values and tourism.
- Litter has resulted in automobile accidents when people swerve to avoid it on the roads, resulting in injury, pain, and suffering to themselves and others.
- Litter damages our streams and also the wildlife and sea life that may mistake it for food or become entrapped in it and be killed by it. This snake was found in illegally dumped trash outside the Berks Street Yard Waste Facility. It died when it could not escape the plastic mesh.



When you toss your litter on the ground, in reality, you are throwing it into the Atlantic Ocean. How? Rain washes the litter into the storm drains leading to our creek system then into the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers, ending in the ocean.

Litter decomposition times vary based upon conditions, breaking down faster when exposed to sunlight and moisture. Can you match these common littered objects with their approximate litter life span? Answers appear below.

plastic bag	A. 1 million years
aluminum can	B. 100 years
plastic water bottle	C. 200-500 years
glass bottle	D. 1-5 years
plastic 6-pack holder	E. 450 years
candy wrapper	F. 10-20 years
cigarette butt	G. 1-3 months

Answers. glass bottle: A, plastic water bottle: B, aluminum can: C, cigarette butt: D, plastic 6-pack holder: E, plastic bag: F, candy wrapper: G.

Shocking, isn't it?

### What can I do?

1. Carry your litter to the next available trash or recycling container, even if it means taking it home with you. Trash containers are easily found at gas stations, supermarkets, fast food stores, and in Palmer Township's parks and along the hike/ bike trails.
2. If you see someone dumping electronics or large items, take a picture and notify the township. Do likewise, if you see litter overflowing from a business site.
3. Participate in litter clean up events like the Great American Cleanup.
4. When you take a walk on the bike path or around your neighborhood, take a trash bag with you and pick up the litter. Post a photo on our Facebook group, EarthStewardsOfPalmer.
5. Hold on to your electronic appliances and household hazardous waste until a special collection event. Tell your friends and neighbors.



### Further reading in the Green Guides on Facebook Group: EarthStewardsOfPalmer

1. Clean Water

### Further reading online

1. Coastal Care's When the Mermaids Cry: The Great Plastic Tide. Learn about how plastic litter is affecting the oceans. <http://plastic-pollution.org>
2. Keep America Beautiful. End Littering. <https://www.kab.org/resources/end-littering>