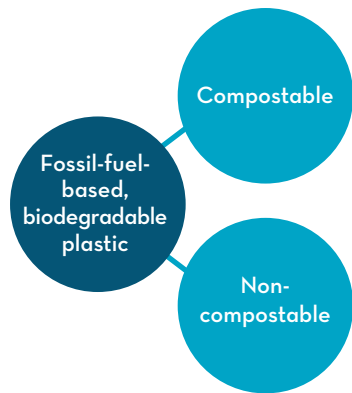
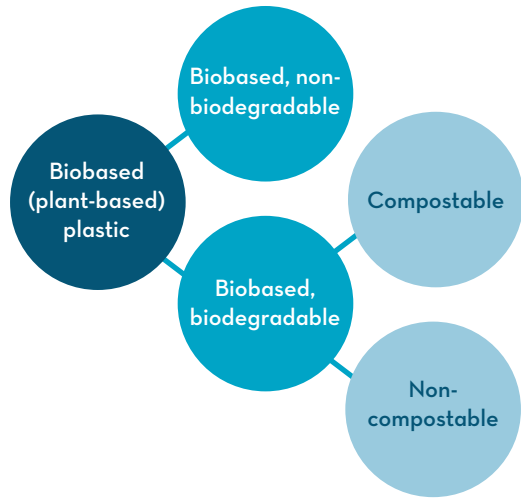


# TYPES OF BIOPLASTICS



BEYOND PLASTICS

**Checklist to Ask Suppliers:**

		Yes	No
1.	Are you sure you can't replace the plastic with a reusable product?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Are you sure you can't replace the plastic with paper or cardboard?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	If plastic is the only option, do you have products that are not derived from fossil fuels? <i>(Bioplastics derived entirely from fossil fuels create similar problems as regular plastic.)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Is the product free of polylactic acid (PLA)? <i>(PLA products are typically made from corn or sugar crops and may also contain toxic chemicals.)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Is it certified by GreenScreen, Cradle to Cradle, or USDA BioPreferred?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	If it's not certified by an independent group, can you tell me what chemicals it contains?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Is it free of PFAS?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Next Steps for Businesses:**

8.	Will your business establish a separate collection bin for biodegradable/compostable products?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Does your area have a commercial composting facility where the material can be sent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	Will your waste hauler bring the source-separated compostables to a commercial composting facility, and is there an extra cost for that?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# BEYOND PLASTICS

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

## A QUICK GUIDE TO 'BIODEGRADABLE' AND 'COMPOSTABLE' PLASTICS

July 2024

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The packaging industry markets bioplastic products as a solution to plastic pollution, claiming they break apart faster in the environment, are made from safer materials, and have smaller climate change impacts than regular plastics, which are created from fossil fuels. However, just because a product is marketed as “biobased,” “compostable,” or “bioplastic” does not necessarily make it better.

**Bioplastic** is an umbrella term for plastic materials that are:

- Partly or entirely derived from renewable plant materials (also known as “biobased” plastic);
- Biodegradable; or
- Both of the above.

They are made using the same processes as traditional plastics. That means they may contain chemical additives – and even less is known about the potential toxicity of those chemicals than the ones in conventional plastics.

## BIODEGRADABLE VERSUS COMPOSTABLE

**Biodegradable plastic** refers to a product that can break apart naturally in the environment, but without a specific timeline. Depending on the product, it can take months or centuries.

**Compostable plastic** can be broken apart by microbes under controlled conditions (for oxygen, temperature, and moisture) at a commercial composting facility. Certified, compostable bioplastics are engineered to fully decompose within 12 weeks at a commercial composting facility. Most U.S. communities do not have access to these facilities, and the majority of U.S. commercial and municipal composters do not accept compostable packaging.

## BEST REPLACEMENTS FOR SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

Eliminating single-use plastics and finding an alternative means for delivering a product is the best choice. Reuse systems that deploy returnable or refillable containers are ideal. Case studies show that reuse saves businesses money. Regular paper or cardboard materials may also be an option and are less expensive than bioplastics.

## BIOPLASTICS REGULATIONS AND CERTIFICATIONS

No federal standards define or regulate bioplastic, biodegradable, or compostable products. Most states do not require “compostable” products to be certified, which leads to consumer confusion. Manufacturers can label products as biodegradable or compostable without meeting any standards. This is why any bioplastic product must be carefully vetted.