



PACKAGING THE FUTURE

compostable packaging test: bambu plates breakdown

Compostable Packaging Test: Bambu Plates Breakdown

by Starre Vartan, 11/11/10 *filed under: Green Materials, green packaging, packaging-the-future*



This week we're thrilled to bring you the latest installment of our **Packaging the Future compost tests**, where we break down the real-life **biodegradability** of **eco packaging**. Although I started this series expecting less than stellar results (what with all the nay-saying regarding biodegradable

inhabitat
green gift guide



GET THE FREE WEEKLY
INHABITAT NEWSLETTER

Subscribe

FOLLOW INHABITAT

-  [Inhabitat RSS Feed](#)
-  [Follow us on Twitter](#)
-  [Add us on Facebook](#)
-  [Follow us on Flickr](#)

BROWSE BY KEYWORD

"sustainable
architecture" **eco
design** green
architecture Green
Building
**green
design**

Recycled Materials

series expecting less than stellar results (what with all the nay-saying regarding biodegradable packaging), I am now pleasantly surprised to say that we are two for two! This week we put the compostable **Bambu brand bamboo plate** to the test and found that it really does break down quite nicely – hit the jump for our in-depth report!



I took the above picture on July 8, 2010, just a few minutes before I added the plate to my backyard compost (which, as **previously detailed, is far from ideal**; I pretty much just throw my kitchen scraps and other compostables on the pile and mix it up with leaves and other garden detritus. I'm not a hard-core composter, so this test is imperfect in that there would be different results if one were to try it in a more well-turned, ventilated, balanced and paid-attention-to compost heap.

Compostable Packaging Test: Bambu Plates Breakdown

by Starr Vartan, 11/11/10 *Read on in: Green Materials, green packaging, packaging-the-future*



After 3 1/2 months, the bamboo plate is rotting pretty well; the mold is breaking down the right side, while the left side is peeling apart and breaking off into the compost heap.

The Bambu plate, while not breaking down as fast as the Whole Foods container, is on its way to turning into soil. While there are some environmental issues associated with bamboo crops, such as artificially accelerated growing techniques and the supplanting of old growth forests, Bambu says their **plates are made from 100% organic bamboo**, which generally comes from well-managed bamboo stands. Since it's thicker and more rigid than the Whole Foods container, and made from bamboo peeled directly from the stalk, it makes sense that it would take longer to degrade.

However the issue raised about still stands: why do compostables matter if most of them won't be composted? There are two main reasons. The first is litter; when plastics make their way into the environment, they don't ever really break down into natural constituents; they just become smaller and smaller pieces of plastic. These bits **often make their way into waterways** where animals ingest (or try to ingest) them, blocking their digestive track and killing them quickly. They may also absorb the chemicals the plastic is made from, killing them slowly. When we eat fish that has been snacking on plastic pieces, we end up with those toxins in our bodies too.

Then there's leaching. When compostable packages eventually (eventually!) break down in a landfill, they are reduced to natural constituents like cellulose or bamboo fiber. When plastic is stuck in a landfill, it will, over time, leach the toxic chemicals used to make the container, which can eventually work its way into local water tables. Yep, that means that we (or the animals we eat) end up drinking that water.

inhabitat
green gift guide



GET THE FREE WEEKLY
INHABITAT NEWSLETTER

Subscribe

FOLLOW INHABITAT

-  [Inhabitat RSS Feed](#)
-  [Follow us on Twitter](#)
-  [Add us on Facebook](#)
-  [Follow us on Flickr](#)

BROWSE BY KEYWORD

"sustainable
architecture" **eco
design** green
architecture Green
Building
**green
design**
Recycled Materials
renewable energy Solar
Power Sustainable
Building
**sustainable
design**

READ INHABITAT

-  [Architecture >](#)
-  [Landscape >](#)
-  [Interiors >](#)
-  [Furniture >](#)
-  [Products >](#)
-  [Gadgets >](#)
-  [Fashion >](#)
-  [Graphics >](#)
- [Transportation >](#)
- [Energy >](#)



Compostable Packaging Test: Bambu Plates Breakdown

by Starre Vartan, 11/11/10

[Next Order: Green Materials](#), [green packaging](#), [packaging-the-future](#)



So the real reason that compostables are better than plastic is that they are better for the health of human beings (and other animals). Over time, they also take up less space in landfills. And that's only looking at the disposal part of the cycle; a quick look at [how a plastic plate is made](#), versus how one is made from natural materials that biodegrade, shows that the creation process for plastics creates more toxic waste too (though due to the size of production facilities — essentially the scale of production — plastics may use less energy to create).

I know, it's a lot to think about the next time you get your friends together for [chips](#) and drinks and you're looking for some plates for the apps. I would definitely buy Bambu plates if I absolutely HAD to use disposables. But if you want to save money and really be environmentally friendly, use real dishes and get your friends to help you wash up. A lot of our conveniences are just that — not really necessary. I regularly entertain both indoors and out, and I use the real stuff when I do. If you are afraid of ruining your plates or kids breaking them, consider thirfling some extra plates (Goodwill always has fun prints available that you can mix and match) and storing them for parties. Disposable ANYthing is never as good as reusable objects, at least when it comes to the planet.

GET THE FREE WEEKLY
INHABITAT NEWSLETTER

Subscribe

FOLLOW INHABITAT

- [Inhabitat RSS Feed](#)
- [Follow us on Twitter](#)
- [Add us on Facebook](#)
- [Follow us on Flickr](#)

BROWSE BY KEYWORD

["sustainable architecture"](#) [eco design](#) [green architecture](#) [Green Building](#) [green design](#) [Recycled Materials](#) [renewable energy](#) [Solar Power](#) [Sustainable Building](#) [sustainable design](#)

READ INHABITAT

- [Architecture >](#)
- [Landscape >](#)