


Queen of Green

Joan Ayers wants to say just one word to you: *Plastics*.

"It's just this thing, this blob," she says. "It's like, what do we do with it now? It doesn't ever go away."

Ayers, founder of the Occidental-based sustainable retailer Homebody Refill, thinks a lot about plastics. "I've always been a minimalist," she explains. "I'd wash my Ziplocs — I'd have the same box for years." Then, after decades of judiciously reusing her baggies, Ayers encountered a heart-wrenching video of a sea turtle with a plastic straw lodged up its nose. She realized, "It's time for me to do something. I'm part of this problem, and I don't want to be."

Ayers — who still works by day as an executive assistant in commercial real estate — started researching the concept of refill shops, where customers fill their own reusable containers with bulk household products, and debuted the business last July. She sets up at local farmers markets with jugs stocked with dish soap, shampoo, and all-purpose cleaner, along with bamboo brushes, silicone covers, and reusable glass containers. The response was immediate. "Lots of people were like, 'Oh my God! I've been looking for a place like this!'"

Ayers enjoys answering customers' questions. "When people come by, and they had no clue this was available — I love those conversations," she says. "Just talking to people, helping them understand that there are alternatives out there and, whatever they do, every little step helps." 

707-331-5920 or homebodyrefill.com

-Megan McCrea

Beth Schlanker



Three quick tips to cut down on plastic waste

- Just say no to freebies, handouts, and other small bits of plastic you don't need.
- Avoid plastic forks and spoons by keeping a reusable cutlery set in your car or purse for meals on the go.
- Make smart swaps. Ayers says there's a non-plastic alternative for nearly every plastic item in your home — think shampoo bars, mesh produce bags, and silicone lid covers. "The silicone covers come in different sizes and shapes, they're really stretchy, and they last a long time."

Homebody Refill's Joan Ayers started her business after being inspired by a visit to a similar no-waste shop while on vacation.