

How do your tea bags fare on the compost heap?

Brand	Does it contain plastic?	Will it break down in a domestic compost heap?	Is it biodegradable - breaks down in a high heat commercial facility?	Comments from suppliers
Clipper	Some bags do, but currently working on an alternative. String and tag bags don't.	Some will, ie the string and tag bags but the majority won't	Yes	Clippers' square tea bags contain polypropylene to provide the heat- seal function. The filter paper is permitted in Organic certified products. String & Tag tea bags: these use a knot in the string to close the bag, and therefore they do not contain any heat seal polymer fibres. Clipper say "Being plastic free is very important to us as a brand and we are working hard to ensure we can do this as soon as possible whilst also maintaining the high quality of our tea." However, they are concerned that the corn starch used in non-plastic bags is often from GM plants, so not appropriate for organic use.
Co-op	Yes, but it is hoped an alternative will be produced this year.	Currently no. Awaiting new specification.	Currently no. This is promised in the new specification.	Co-op has joined forces with its tea supplier, Typhoo, and Ahlstrom-Munksjö, specialists in sustainable fibre solutions, to develop the new method of heat sealing bags which will eliminate the use of the plastic seal. The new bio-degradable bag could be on shelves later this year.
Duchy Organic tea	No	Yes	Yes	However, Waitrose own brand do contain plastic. They say "We are at present working with the tea industry to develop new materials to remove the necessity of using plastic based glues and will be championing this as a material when available."
PG Tips	The current pyramid® bags do. But they are working on a replacement.	Currently no. And nor will new bags be.	Currently no. But the new material is made from corn starch and is claimed to be fully biodegradable.	Their aim is to move all of the PG tips tea bags to our new plant based material by the end of 2018. The new tea bags will be sealed using a new material that is 100% plant-based and 100% renewable. Although they will not be compostable, PG Tips give the following advice: "Our new tea bags are completely biodegradable and will break down under the right environmental conditions. If you have a food waste recycling collection in your area, you can put your used tea bags in there. Alternatively, you could pop it into your home composter, however, our climate means it can take a long time to break down, so you may want to sieve out the leftover part of your tea bag and discard it or dig in with the compost."

Pukka	No	Yes	Yes	<p>Tea bag paper is made of a special blend of natural abaca (a type of banana) and plant cellulose fibres. Our supply of tea bag paper is also unbleached, we use an organic cotton string without a staple .The tea bag strings are made from 100% organic, non-GMO, un-bleached cotton</p> <p>On the tea bag envelopes, they say “We want to keep our blended herbal tea bags preserved as much as possible to lock in the freshness and retain the high essential oil content which gives them such a unique and strong taste, which means using a sachet. ... (these) are not currently recyclable as the paper used to make the tea sachets has a Polyethylene (PE) lamination. However, over the last two years, we have been working hard to develop a sustainable solution for our tea sachets, that performs well from both an environmental and product quality point of view. We have now arrived at a concept that is currently being implemented across a proportion of our blends.”</p>
Tea Pigs	No	No	Yes	<p>The temples (tea bags) and the string attached are made from cornstarch, a natural carbohydrate extracted from corn. The label on the end of the string is made from paper. Even the ink on the label is vegetable-based, and everything is sealed with heat – so no plastic glue. Tea pigs have also changed their packaging. The inner clear bags, which hold the tea bags inside the carton, are now made of <i>natureflex</i>, made from renewable wood pulp. This keeps the bags airtight, and is compostable.</p>
Tetley	Yes	No	No	<p>Tetley say “sustainable sourcing is very important to us. We continually seek to work with our suppliers to improve and explore the most sustainable production processes and methods. We’ve worked hard to ensure that our tea bags are 99% bio degradable. However, as a result of the manufacturing process, Tetley tea bags do contain a very small amount of plastic to ensure the bags remain closed for you to enjoy your cup of tea.”</p>
Twinings	Yes, apart from the pyramid bags.	No	Yes	<p>Twinings’ statement: “We are committed to improving the sustainability of our products & packaging. Working with our suppliers, we are actively developing and trialling fully biodegradable tea bags, guaranteeing the same quality & great taste people expect. We have several types of tea bag design across our ranges, our pyramid teabag design is already plastic free & fully biodegradable, or if you prefer no bag we also have an extensive loose leaf range“</p>
Typhoo	No information available.	No information available.	No information available.	<p>Doesn’t give any specific details on the website regarding biodegradable tea bags. See Co-op above.</p>
Yorkshire Tea	Yes	Currently no. Awaiting new specification.	Currently no. This is promised in the new specification.	<p>Yorkshire Tea are researching a plant-based, fully biodegradable tea bag paper. They have recently began a second round of tests on some prototype tea bags, results are expected by June 2018. They are also working towards our commitment to have all Yorkshire Tea products certified carbon neutral by 2020 https://www.yorkshiretea.co.uk/brew-news/plastic-in-tea-bags</p>