

“Greenwashing”

Posted on 7-15-21 by New Composite Partners

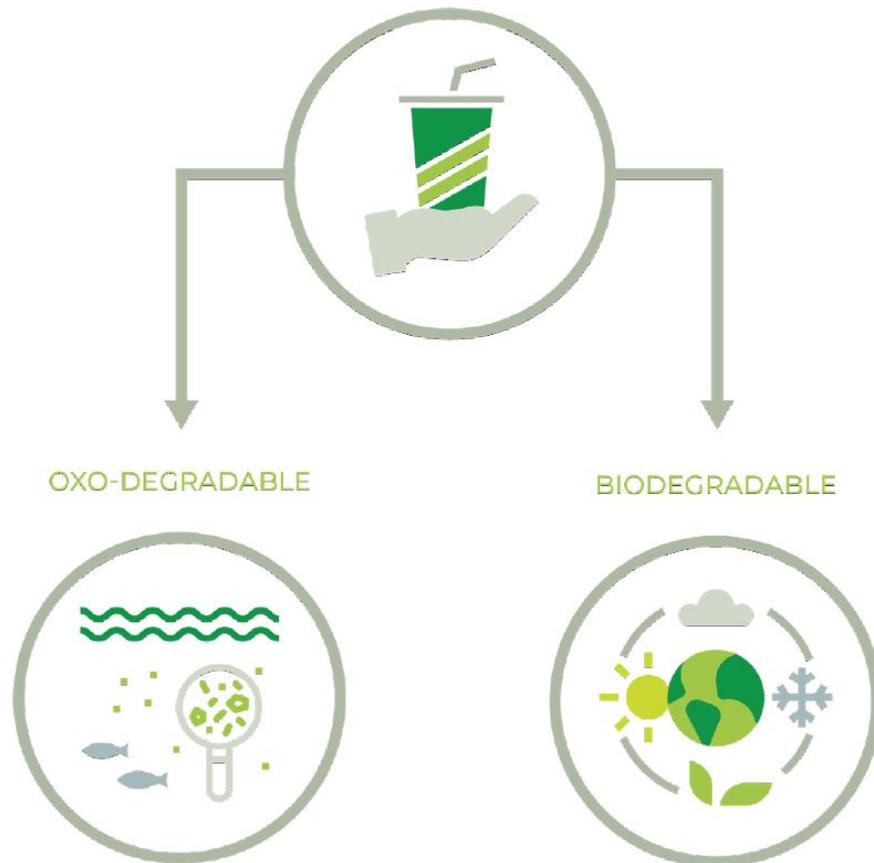


Polymer advancements have created a plethora of material solutions branded as environmentally friendly. However, not all materials on the market are created equal. Many people want to transition to a “greener” lifestyle, but are unaware of how to begin. The first step is understanding the difference between a true Bioplastic and what is known as “Greenwashing”. So how do you know what to look for?

Greenwashing is defined as the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service. For example, the term 'natural' was found on products in ranging from toys and baby care items to health and beauty products. If unexplained and unsupported, the word 'natural' can mean different things to different consumers.

Greenwashing utilizes misdirection to lead consumers to believe issues of sustainability are being properly tackled. Greenwashing takes up valuable space in the fight against significant environmental issues like climate change, plastic pollution, air and ocean pollution. Greenwashing breeds complacency when we need further and stronger action to fight these issues.

Greenwashing has created more problems for the environment and confusion within our waste and reuse systems. For example, any product stating that it is “oxo-degradable” is not truly a biodegradable product. Oxo-biodegradable plastic is made by blending a pro-degradant additive into a plastic during the extrusion process. This additive is a catalyst which speeds up plastic degradation in the environment. Oxo-degradable plastics work by quickly fragmenting plastics into smaller and smaller pieces, called microplastics. However, they don’t break down at the molecular or polymer level like true biodegradable and compostable plastics. The resulting microplastics appear to have been degraded but are actually left in the environment for an indefinite amount of time.



After alarming reports of microplastic pollution in oceans and beaches, the global scientific community intensified its focus into this area. Researchers have since found evidence of microplastic contamination everywhere—in our lakes and rivers, beverages and food supplies.

Biodegradation is a process that occurs when materials are broken down by bacteria, fungi, or other biological means. All material will degrade eventually but Greenwashing has led to products being improperly labeled as Biodegradable. A Greenwashing tactic may label an oxo-degradable plastic as biodegradable because it appears to disappear, or will be invisible to the naked eye in a matter of months or years. However, a truly biodegradable product is composed of only natural ingredients and will fully return to the Earth in the form of natural components in a shorter period of time. A truly biodegradable product will not leave behind microplastics, toxic chemicals or harmful components.

Due to the fact that all matter could degrade, even if that requires thousands of years for the process to be complete, there is no standard regulation around utilizing the word biodegradable. The multitude of “biodegradable” options on the market is staggering, and a true biodegradable bioplastic should be certified and verified with test results to prove the biodegradable characteristics.

Certification helps to prevent Greenwashing and the continuation of incorrect disposal of non biodegradable products. A true biodegradable product will degrade down to its most biological form at the end of its life. Unlike petroleum products that disrupt the natural cycle of life, biodegradable products preserve the order of nature by wholly returning to the earth as natural components.

Beware of “biodegradable” claims, and remember to make sure when purchasing biodegradable products that they meet specified BPI-approved, ASTM D6400 or D6868 standards.



New Composite Partners provides tailored services using the knowledge of a global team to advance the interests of environmental products and technologies world-wide.

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