

Plastic Waste

The world greeted the first artificial plastic with excitement in the mid-19th century. A well-known 1955 issue of LIFE magazine published an article on disposable plastic, with an image of household items that would together take 40 hours to clean and that could now simply be thrown away. Yet because of that convenience, people have since produced and consumed an enormous amount of plastic, estimated to be 300 million tons per year, and this number is expected to increase.

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The world is now facing more than 9.1 billion tons of accumulated plastic waste on the Earth, which, even when collected and buried, still exists for hundreds of years, changing the physical properties of the soil, causing soil erosion, and preventing the earth from retaining water and nutrition. Another 13 million tons of plastic has been dumped into the ocean, damaging coral reefs and threatening the habitat of marine animals and plants, resulting in millions of ocean animals dying from plastic poisoning every year. Environmental activists have warned that the volume of plastic waste in the ocean may exceed that of fish by 2050.

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When were artificial plastics first invented?

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How much plastic waste is now spread around the world?

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What effect does plastic in the ocean have?