



## “Beat Plastic Pollution”

**Straws. Plastic bags. Plastic bottles. Plastic utensils. Plastic cups.** What do these items all have in common? Besides the fact that they are made of plastic; in most cases they are used once, then disposed of. When was the last time you used one of those items? Probably just a few minutes ago or you may even have one in your possession as you read this article. Think about it, around the world millions of people like you are using and throwing away plastics. This problem presents a huge challenge not only to the environment and human health but it also places enormous economic burdens on countries such as Guyana. Therefore, in an attempt to raise awareness on this escalating global issue, World Environment Day (WED) 2018 is being observed under the theme ‘**Beat Plastic Pollution**’, with the slogan, ‘**If you can’t reuse it, refuse it**’. WED is an iconic day on the environmental calendar as it is designated to spread awareness about various environmental issues, seeking to initiate positive actions for the environment. Over the years, the focus has been on many pervasive issues which includes climate change, wildlife conservation, and pollution, among others. First observed in 1974, WED is celebrated on June 05, each year.

### This year’s theme

The focus of this year’s theme is on reducing plastic pollution due to the many negative impacts that can arise especially from single-use plastics. While plastics are a convenient item, they pose significant environmental issues.

**Improper disposal** of garbage leads to the clogging of drains, and for those who live along Guyana’s coast which is under sea level, there is the increased risk of flooding.

**Plastics are non-biodegradable** which means that when they are disposed of, whether in a landfill or not, they remain there for long periods of time (hundreds of years). In fact, plastics never completely go away; they are broken down into very tiny pieces that remain.

**Plastics are a danger to wildlife.** When we dispose of plastics improperly they make their way into the marine environment where they can be ingested by animals such as sea turtles and marine birds. Since these animals cannot digest plastics, they eventually die of starvation.

**Plastics are a risk to human health** since they contain a number of chemicals, many of which are toxic or disrupt hormones. These can make their way into our water supply or can enter our bodies through food.

**Plastics can also serve as a magnet** for other pollutants, including dioxins, metals and pesticides.

## Do your part to beat plastic pollution

- Reduce the amount of plastics you use
- Make use of alternatives, e.g., paper bags, cardboard boxes, biodegradable food containers
- Refuse a plastic bag when doing shopping
- Take your own reusable bag for shopping
- Reuse plastic items to make craft
- Take your own lunch to school/work
- Take your water/juice to work in a reusable container

At the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), we are committed to combatting this issue. Presently, we enforce the Litter Prevention Regulations which make littering a crime. We also organise training and awareness sessions for various groups and organisations aimed at imparting practical knowledge of how plastics can be reduced. Additionally, we coordinate different programs which highlight initiatives that are aimed at reducing the use of single –use plastics. ***We encourage all Guyanese to make it their motto to ‘REFUSE WHAT YOU CAN’T REUSE’ so together, we can BEAT PLASTIC POLLUTION.***

You can also contribute to the movement against single-use plastics by attending any of the following activities:

Activity	Venue	Date	Time
National Conversation on Single-use Plastic	Herdmanston Lodge	June 5, 2018	10:00 h
Mayor and City Council WED Concert	Promenade Gardens	June 5, 2018	10:00 h
Beach Clean-up	Kingston Seawall	June 5, 2018	17:00 h

***You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O ECEA Programme, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: [eit.epaguyana@gmail.com](mailto:eit.epaguyana@gmail.com) or follow us on Facebook and Instagram.***