



## Plastic

The plethora of coloured plastic bins in the UK seems to me a peculiar way of handling waste. I now have a grey bin for general waste, a grey bin with a brown top for cardboard, a blue bin for tins and glass, a green bin for garden waste and am awaiting a fifth bin for food waste. Something similar applies to every household in the country. There are roughly 28 million households in the UK, some of whom have more than one of each prettily coloured bin. That makes something like 140,000,000 plastic bins produced to help stop poisoning the world with waste, including plastic.

That's a simplification, but I find it hard to understand the logic here. Apart from the inherent contradiction of aims and intentions, they are ugly. Look down any street and you will often see these rainbow bins spread out like dead daleks, resting where the 'waste consultants' have thrown them or where the wind has blown them. They clutter gardens and driveways and look blatantly ugly. We are being asked, in brief, to save the planet by destroying our streets and gardens, and to recycle by producing an Everest of plastic.

I'm no waste engineer not town planner but the whole idea seems bonkers. I visualize a waste consultancy quango somewhere in the halls of Westminster led by someone with an ego significantly larger than their common sense, coming up with this escalating fiasco. Are there groups out there who think the same way as me, that there must surely be better ways to save the world without polluting our homes with these plastic monsters?

For a start, companies should reduce packaging, especially foods. There never used to be reasons to wrap fruit and veg in clingfilm or deliver small items in mighty boxes. Second, we are being asked to do everything that recycling companies should do themselves. Let them sort everything out and leave us with a single bin. Before we know it, we will be asked to accompany our bins to the waste depot HQ, don masks and do the entire job ourselves. Well, that probably won't happen, but with five huge bins already, who knows what will happen next.

I think we should take a step back. It is clearly wrong when we are determined to rid the world of plastic waste, to create 140 million of these eyesores, made of the very stuff we are trying to eliminate. One bin, like the One Ring, could rule them all and in the darkness cast them. Simplicity should prevail. And beauty. Keats's words about Truth and Beauty come to mind, though I hesitate to use them in this context. But these horrendous bins are neither beautiful nor truthful. They are the manifestations of second rate thinking by overpaid executives and are the most self-defeating problem solver ever concocted by the mind of man.

I visualize our streets lined with trees and shrubs, and I see gardens full of plants and colourful flowers. If the only way to save the world is to flood it with these monstrosities, then we are in trouble. Nothing as ugly and intrusive as this can be right. I don't have the definitive answer, but there must be brighter minds than mine who can solve the problem without making our streets look like some hellish version of Telly Tubby Land.