MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: INTRODUCING TWO OF THE FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE PLASTIC REDUCTION COMMITTEE

May 26, 2026



Illustration by Olexa Hewryk

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By Zoe Kaplan-Lewis and Lois Wilcken

Lois Wilcken

I joined the Coop in the summer of 1996, in part to learn about cooperatives and in part because I’m a longtime vegetarian with concerns about toxins in our food. I heard from friends that the Coop carried organic food at reasonable prices. As it turns out, toxic micro- and nanoparticles (MNPs) from plastic packaging shed into that nice

clean food. I have some quality science I can share with you about that.

I have had a longtime, intuitive antipathy for plastics, and I can recall the rage I felt when my family got its first artificial holiday tree. I refused to decorate it—or even look at it. I go back to when we drank soda through paper straws, so I know what's possible. We cannot turn back the clock, but we can do a lot better on plastic reduction than we are, and we can start with single-use plastics. We can do it in a cooperative spirit.



Dad shows Lois her first (real) Christmas tree.

Zoë Kaplan-Lewis

My love for food is inseparable from my experiences at the Park Slope Food Coop, like methodically picking out produce with my mom when I was a kid. It felt like the food was teaching me something—a deeper connection and appreciation for nature. Like that every orange is different—some have smooth skin, some have rough skin, and those will have different tastes. I still love to pick an odd-looking piece of fruit and wonder what it will taste like, how it will compare to the others.

My love for food expanded into an appreciation for growers when I worked on Grindstone Farm, a supplier to the Coop. If you want to read about my experience, check out the *Linewaiters' Gazette* archives for an article my father wrote: "A Visit to Grindstone Farm," August 2, 2007.



Zoë at Grindstone Farm—a supplier to the Coop.

As plastic packaging became more common, I started to notice the plastic more than the food. It began as a sensory issue. Plastic packaging was difficult to open and created so much waste. As I learned more about the health hazards of plastic, I worried about it contaminating my food and affecting my body. I helped found the Plastic Reduction Committee because I believe we can make plastic-free, affordable food options more accessible to all Coop members.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON PLASTIC AT THE COOP

We created a survey for members' feedback on plastic use at the Coop. Over 70% of those who have filled out the survey so far report being at least moderately concerned about plastic use at the Coop, and nearly 40% are very or extremely concerned. Plastic packaging is impacting members' buying choices. As one member shared, "I love berries but hardly ever buy them because of the plastic containers."

Thank you to the 400+ members we have heard from so far. We feel your enthusiasm for plastic reduction and love your many great ideas! If you haven't filled out the survey yet, please take a few minutes to do so. We are accepting responses through the end of May. Access the survey here.

Our email: ReducePlasticPSFC@gmail.com

Zoe Kaplan-Lewis and Lois Wilcken are two founding members of the Plastic Reduction Committee, established in 2025.