Which UK Teabags Are Plastic Free?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **The short version:** What the tea makers themselves say about their bags, the PLA caveat, and how to check a pack yourself.

"Plastic free" on a teabox does not always mean what you think. It pairs with our other teabag safety reading, including are teabags plastic.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in March 2026. Rebuilt from the makers' own statements on 18 September 2026.

General information based on the makers' own statements, checked on 18 September 2026; the science is evolving and figures are estimates, not medical advice.

What the makers say (checked 18 September 2026)

Brand	What the maker says	What that means
Pukka	Tea bags are staple-free, stitched with organic cotton and certified home compostable; the paper envelopes still have a very thin plastic coating, under 5% of the envelope's weight (Pukka packaging)	No plastic in the bag; the envelope is not plastic-free
Dragonfly	Tea bag paper sealed with PLA, a plant-based polymer, for industrial composting; the inner pouch is foil containing plastic (Dragonfly packaging)	Food waste bin, not the garden heap; the pouch is not plastic-free
Yorkshire Tea	The oil-based plastic in its tea bags was replaced with PLA, a plant-based plastic (Bettys & Taylors annual review 2025)	Plant-based, but PLA is still a plastic; follow your pack's disposal instructions
Teapigs	Tea temples break down in industrial composting within 12 weeks; the inner bag is a soft plastic (Teapigs sustainability)	Council food waste collection, not the garden bin
Twinings	Announced a new tea bag format that is home and industrially compostable, including the string and tag (Twinings announcement)	Applies to the new format; older packs may differ, so check yours

Brand	What the maker says	What that means
PG Tips, Tetley, Clipper, Hampstead, Typhoo, supermarket own-brand	Not checked by us for this update	Check the pack and the brand's own website

Treat any list like this as dated: brands keep changing their packaging, and one brand's packs can differ by range. We removed figures we previously quoted from a consumer-group study because we could not check the report itself.

The PLA caveat

The biggest source of confusion is PLA (polylactic acid), a plant-based plastic made from corn starch or sugarcane. Some makers market PLA bags as plastic-free because it is plant-derived rather than petroleum-based, but it is still a polymer that behaves like other plastics in many ways, so the label is misleading read strictly. Research on PLA-specific shedding under brewing heat is thinner than for conventional plastics, and the conservative view is that PLA is not equivalent to true paper-only construction. It is also industrially compostable but not home compostable, so compostable on a PLA pack means an industrial facility, not your garden bin. See what PLA is.

The string, tag and wrapper layers

It pays to look beyond the bag itself, because a teabag can hide plastic in several places. The bag material is the main concern, but the string is sometimes nylon rather than cotton, the tag is sometimes plastic-coated for water resistance, the individual envelope is sometimes plastic-coated cellulose, and even the box can have a plastic inner coating. To cut plastic out completely, every one of these needs to be free of it, not just the bag. The cleanest brands (Dragonfly, Hampstead, Pukka) tend to be free of plastic in every component, whereas many brands with plastic free bags still use a plastic string, tag or wrapper.

How to verify a claim yourself

A few habits cut through the marketing. Read the packaging literally: plastic-free or 100% biodegradable is more reliable than vague natural materials or eco-friendly. Look for specific certifications, TUV Austria's OK Compost Home is the strictest home-compostability mark, EN13432 covers industrial composting. Check brand websites, where ethical brands usually disclose materials component by component. Search independent testing from Which? or Ethical Consumer for third-party verification. And when in doubt, loose leaf avoids the tea bag itself, though its pouch or caddy may still contain plastic. See how to avoid plastic.

Pricing across plastic-free brands

Choosing a bag with less plastic does not have to cost more: mainstream brands have changed their bags without becoming premium products. Premium brands such as Pukka and Dragonfly cost more, reflecting their recipes and sourcing rather than the bag alone.

Loose-leaf: the simplest certainty

The single cleanest answer is loose-leaf tea, brewed with a stainless-steel infuser, a teapot and strainer or a gaiwan. No bag means no plastic in the bag itself (check the pouch or caddy), the cost is usually lower per cup than premium plastic-free bags, and the cup is generally better. The only barriers are practical, a little kit and a little clean-up, not economic. See loose leaf tea.

What to buy

From our shelf: Pukka (cotton-stitched, home compostable bags; envelopes with a thin plastic coating), Dragonfly (plant-based PLA seal, industrial composting), Yorkshire Tea (PLA bags) or Teapigs (industrially compostable temples). For no tea bag at all, loose leaf tea, though check the pouch too. We don't sell Hampstead or Heath and Heather at the moment. For the kit, a teapot or a stainless-steel infuser.

Reference noted

- Hernandez et al., Plastic Teabags Release Particles (2019)
- Food Standards Scotland: Microplastics in food

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Make the simplest switch on this page that fits your routine. Checking every brand can wait until week two.

More tea reading

For the broader plastic question see are teabags plastic and microplastics in teabags explained. For PLA specifically see what is PLA in teabags. For PFAS concerns see PFAS in teabags. For switching see the switch guide. For loose-leaf brewing see brewing loose leaf tea.

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