Plastic Free Tea Bags: The UK Brand Status

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Plastic-free tea bags, in summary:** Most major UK tea brands now use plastic-free biodegradable bags (PG Tips 2018, Yorkshire 2019, Twinings 2020, Clipper, Pukka, many own-brands); loose leaf skips it entirely.

Once you know most standard tea bags contain a little plastic, the obvious next question is which ones do not. The good news: plastic free is now mainstream. The catch: the labels are a minefield. This page is the practical who and how, part of the sustainability cluster with composting tea bags.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in February 2026.

What "plastic free" actually has to mean

A bag that is really plastic free has no polypropylene sealing layer and no plastic mesh: it is either folded and stitched, or sealed with a plant based material such as PLA, or it is loose leaf with no bag at all. The distinction, and it matters, is that "plant based" or "biodegradable" is not automatically the same as "home compostable", a nuance the composting guide handles in detail.

The brands that genuinely deliver

This is where the brand stories earn their place, because a structural brand commitment beats label reading every time. Clipper built its identity on unbleached, plastic free, non GM bags and was early to it. Pukka uses organic, plant based stitched bags with no plastic. Dragonfly has long used cotton stitched bags with no sealing plastic. Teapigs moved its tea temples to plant based PLA. Several giants have followed; the direction is clearly positive.

How to check a pack you do not know

Ignore vague green imagery and look for specific, verifiable claims: "plastic free", "unbleached", "made without polypropylene", or a named certification, rather than a leaf logo and the word "natural". If the only sustainability signal is a colour and a vibe, treat it as unproven.

Or skip the bag entirely

The most reliably plastic free tea is loose leaf with a reusable strainer: no bag, no seal, no mesh, no ambiguity, and usually a better cup, see loose leaf vs tea bags and the teaware guide. Even a partial switch

reduces the problem proportionally and improves the tea at the same time.

In summary

Plastic free tea is now easy: pick one of the structurally committed brands as your default, or drink loose leaf, and you have solved it in a single decision rather than a lifetime of label squinting. The detail of why the labels are confusing, and how composting fits, is in the rest of this cluster and the best UK tea brands guide.

Plastic-free tea bags, the UK landscape at a glance

Brand	Plastic-free status
PG Tips	Yes since 2018 (cornstarch heat-seal)
Yorkshire Tea	Yes since 2019
Twinings	Yes across core ranges since 2020
Clipper	Yes since 2018; long-time leader on plastic-free
Pukka	Always; uses stitched plant-fibre bags
Heath & Heather	Yes
Many supermarket own-brands	Increasingly yes; check the back of pack
Loose leaf	Bypasses the question entirely

Reference noted

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

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · A small, reliable stash of plastic free teas beats a big, curious one. Cycle two or three plastic free teas you really enjoy.

Plastic-free tea reading

Continue with plastic in tea bags, microplastics from tea, tea sustainability, loose-leaf tea, Pukka brand and Clipper.

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