

A Tiny House Blog Publication

# TINY HOUSE

FOR MICRO, TINY, SMALL, AND UNCONVENTIONAL HOUSE ENTHUSIASTS

[www.tinyhousemagazine.co](http://www.tinyhousemagazine.co)



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In our conversion to tiny(er) house living, I traded my previous lack of time for an overall lack of space, and I'm good with that. I knew our constraints – 680 sq ft divided amongst five people and a dog - and pared down our belongings accordingly. It was a low-stress endeavor. Why? Because I knew if we truly *needed* something, it was only a brown paper package away.

You know the thrill: the last-minute must-have, the adrenaline kick that comes from the click, that little smile on a brown background, waiting like a gift on your front steps. Even deep in our forest, thirty miles from the nearest sleepy town, I am not immune to e-commerce's charms.

What we didn't realize, (maybe because of our previous enabling device: an enormous blue bin consistently emptied by the City,) was the amount of packaging we would have to manage. Our left-over wrappers and boxes, flattened and

WRITTEN BY :: MEGHAN MARSDEN

**AVOID THE STORE.  
SHIP TO DOOR.**

*the bad boy romance  
you don't want to break off*

stacked, threaten to topple from deck-top towers and swallow us, tsunami-like as we sleep.

As much as I want to blame the forest's current No-Burn order, I cannot. The convenience of ship-to-door is the modern-day version of a bad-boy romance. It does not matter if you are monogamously betrothed to Amazon or an equal opportunity Jezebel for all e-tail. There is an environmental cost to our relationship with online shopping.

Ten million boxes ship *every day* via e-commerce. That doesn't count the bubble wrap or padded envelopes, the shipping peanuts, inflated air pillows, reams of paper, or plastic wrap that accompany every item purchased. **Nearly a third of solid waste in the US, about 80 million tons, comes from packaging.** Judging from the back deck and the view our surplus packing supplies obscures, I believe it.

## **What can one tiny(er) house dweller in the middle of lockdown orders do?**

*Quite a bit.*

### **REDUCE**

A culture of immediacy has developed in our lives. As a busy, working mom of three, securing our unexpected needs with a quick click on my phone has been a powerful lifesaver. It is habit-forming, and often unnecessary. Consider collecting those same unexpected must-haves in your virtual cart, sitting down once per week (or month), adding in your staples, and removing those items you don't really need. A single order, with fewer returns, means less packaging and a smaller environmental delivery cost.

Open a chat with your online retailer and request alternative packaging. Most stores offer plastic-free, recycled materials, biodegradable cornstarch packing peanuts, or other eco-friendly options. The kindergarten adage, 'you get what you get, and you don't throw a fit,' doesn't apply. Ask for what you need.




### **RE-USE**

For me, the idea of re-used boxes conjures images of kids' crafts, forts, and robot Halloween costumes. While fun to build, they don't seem terribly environmentally conscientious. Well, Monika Wiela, founder of **The Give Back Box**, has changed my view of 're-use' forever.

Ms. Wiela, once owner of an online shoe store, happened upon a homeless gentleman with a sign requesting shoes. Though Monika sold only women's products, his request for footwear felt like a personal call to action. After working with local charities, Ms. Wiela began including shipping labels with every box purchased from her store. Enclosed instructions invited customers to fill the empty shoebox with any serviceable but unwanted household items such as shoes or clothing. The shipping slip provided free postage to the charity on the label. The receiving aid organization committed to recycle the box and provide a tax receipt to the customer. The concept was a huge success and quickly grew.

Today, Ms. Wiela has contracts with some of the largest retailers in the US, including Overstock, Amazon, Loft, REI, Levi's, Asics, Ann Taylor, LEGO, Nordstrom, Viva Terra, Ecrú, Bonobos, Scrubs & Beyond, eBags, Lou & Grey and many others. What's not to love? Now any box can be a Give Back Box. Learn more at the **[GiveBackBox.com](https://www.GiveBackBox.com)**.



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<b>OPEN YOUR BOX</b>	<b>PACK YOUR BOX</b>	<b>SEND YOUR BOX</b>
Unpack your merchandise from the box and obtain the prepaid shipping label.	Fill the box with clothing and household goods you no longer need.	Attach the pre-paid shipping label provided to the box and ship as usual.
<b>HOW TO DONATE</b>	<b>BOX PACKING TIPS</b>	<b>HOW TO SEND</b>
USE OUR PARTNERS BOX	GIVE GENEROUSLY	SHIP AS USUAL
OR USE ANY OTHER BOX	STUFF THE BOX FULLY	DROP OFF AT UPS OR FEDEX LOCATION
USE PREPAID SHIPPING LABEL	CLOTHES OR HOUSEHOLD ITEMS	DROP OFF AT USPS LOCATION
OR PRINT LABEL HERE	AVOID LIQUIDS, DEAD WEIGHT	ORDER ONLINE PICKUP

## RECYCLE

Paper products such as envelopes, filler, and boxes are accepted at most commercial recycling programs. Low ink residue paper products can also be composted.

Bubble-lined plastic pouch envelopes, bubble wrap, and air pillows are not typically recyclable in your curbside program but are recyclable with grocery store bags. You can search for a recycling location under your Amazon Account tab, under Second Chance, or click [here](#).



## E-COMMERCE ISN'T GOING AWAY

Nor do I want it to. When used conscientiously, and responsibly managed, online shopping has proven to have a smaller carbon footprint than brick and mortar stores. It allows me to enjoy what I love most about the tiny(er) house lifestyle: time. That's a concept to which I can make a long-term commitment.

*Meghan Marsden is a novelist who writes about the unplanned journey; the one where life kicks your feet out, and you learn to get up again. She was born with the heart of an untamed mountain child, mistakenly raised in a metropolis. She's spending 2020 finding her way home. You'll find more of her published works by clicking [here](#).*

