AGGELOS MALABETSH

THE DELETERIOUS IMPACT OF DISPOSING CLOTHING

THE EFFECTS OF DISPOSING TEXTILES

The EPA estimates that in 2017, of the 16.9 million tons of textile waste generated in the United States, only 15.2% was recycled, which resulted in 11.2 million tons of textile waste ending up in landfills. Since the 1990s, consumer behavior has shifted towards shopping for new clothes frequently, but as consumers purchase more clothing, more frequently, that means textile waste ends up in landfills faster. To put it into perspective, in less than 20 years, the volume of clothing Americans threw away each year doubled and is likely to triple if we don't make a change. The reason for such a drastic increase? Fast fashion. To meet the high demands of the latest fashion trends, many retailers produce inexpensive, non-durable clothing. Because of this, fast fashion retailers may churn out new clothing multiple times a month. Tasha Lewis, a professor at Cornell University's Department of Fiber Science and Apparel Design demonstrates, "It used to be four seasons in a year; now it may be up to 11 or 15 or more.

A factor that most people don't ever consider is the impact our clothes have on the environment. Textile production requires significant amounts of chemicals, water, energy, and other natural resources. According to the World Resources Institute, it takes 2,700 liters of water to make one cotton shirt. And when consumers throw away clothing in the garbage, not only does it waste money and resources, but it can take 200+ years for the materials to decompose in a landfill. During the decomposition process, textiles generate greenhouse methane gas and leach toxic chemicals and dyes into the groundwater and our soil.

EFFORTLESS AND POTENT WAYS TO ALLEVIATE THESE PROBLEMS

- **RECYCLE (**The textile recycling rate is currently one of the lowest compared to other materials. But these fabrics, including worn jeans, stained sweatshirts, and even mismatched socks, can be given a brand new life as new clothing, housing insulation, rags, or even stuffed animals.)

- **DONATE (**Donating gently-used clothing to charitable organizations is a great way to give back while keeping textiles out of landfills.)