

February 2007

B.Y.O.B. Bring Your Own Bag... To the grocery store, that is!

Shopping bags create an insane amount of waste for something that's often in our lives for fewer than 5 minutes (store to car, car to house). Next time you grocery shop, BYOB (bring your own bag).

You're checking out at your local Dave's, Zagara's, Giant Eagle, Wild Oats, or TJ's... how much thought do you give to the consummate check out line question, "Paper or plastic?" Lighten your impact and answer (*proudly*) "Neither!... Brought my own!"

- ❖ Plastic shopping / grocery bags are notorious for becoming litter. They are known in several countries by names such as "Witches' knickers" or "urban tumbleweeds" because of their overwhelming tendency to blow around our cities and shopping areas, clinging to trees, bushes, power lines, and more. The common kind of plastic bag we get from local grocery stores, don't biodegrade.
- ❖ Not only do plastic shopping bags seem to multiply in your kitchen drawers, and create a huge litter problem along freeways and in community shopping areas, they are easily blown great distances and can become life-threatening for birds and marine life. **Plastic shopping bags are one of the 12 most commonly found items in coastal cleanups.**

If you can't get around using plastic bags, tie them into knots before you toss them in the recycle bin. That way they won't balloon up into the air and end up as litter.

The Benefits

- ❖ Save oil and/or trees. In the US, **about 12 million barrels of oil and 14 million trees go to producing plastic and paper bags each year.**
- ❖ Reusing makes cents. Stores like Wild Oats offer a **5-cent discount** if you bring your own and **Trader Joe's** enters your name into a raffle for a gift basket.
- ❖ **Be a role model.** Other shoppers'll watch and learn.
- ❖ **Return plastic grocery bags!** Many grocery stores (i.e., Giant Eagle and Zagara's) have large collection bins (usually right at the front doors) for shopping bag recycling.

Wanna Try?

If you drive, keep your reusable shopping bag in your trunk so it's handy for unexpected grocery store stops.

Most grocery stores in the greater Cleveland area sell canvas tote / shopping bags, so they're easy to find. Trader Joe's sells an inexpensive (\$2.99) laminated version and each time you BYOB at TJ's you're entered into a raffle to win a gift basket full of yummy TJ treats.

If you're interested in getting something with a little more flair, check out the following sites:

- ❖ b. happybags - these are a favorite because they are sassy, sturdy, and extra wide - perfect for a six pack of organic beer and chips (\$20).
- ❖ Blue Lotus - handbag-happy Sara likes these best, especially because 10% of their profits go to protecting sea turtles harmed by the use of the bags (\$5-15).
- ❖ "BYOB" Reusable Shopping Bag - made from hemp (\$10).
- ❖ "Please Stop Using Plastic Bags" Canvas Bag - a bag that makes it easy for those slow-on-the-uptake to get the hint (\$15).
- ❖ "Plastic Bags Blow" Activist Kit - spread the green word (\$3).
- ❖ Mimi Shopper - Be Euro-hip in the check out line (\$45).
- ❖ Posch - made from recycled pillowcases (\$40).