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WOMAN

Magazine

**MERRY
CHRISTMAS!**

**A December
State of Mind**

**ABC's of
Holiday Style!**

Decadent Delights

**In this edition:
SC Green Scene**

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Did You Bring Your Bag Today?

By Peggy New

Did you know that according to the US EPA, the average American household uses over 850 supermarket bags per year? And only a minimal number of them are ever recycled; many find their way into the environment causing eye sore litter and harm to animals. About 1/3 the weight of our city garbage is packaging; the epitome of which is a plastic or paper bag. The statistics regarding land fills, recycling, garbage poundage and "carbon footprints" are vast and often confusing. For many of us recycling means dropping an empty milk jug in the green container ... occasionally ... because it is so much easier to just put in trash can lined with a large plastic bag that gets all our "garbage." We sometimes pat ourselves on the back when we chose plastic over paper, or paper over plastic or even just put the pack of gum directly in our pocket with any bag.

In 1979 Gordon Dancy invented the high density plastic grocery sack as a replacement for traditional paper bags. Today his daughter, Kristen Brown has invented an even better replacement for BOTH paper and plastic bags. They are called the "Eco Bag System."

Global climate changes and economic downturns are concepts most Americans are familiar with one way or another. However, until one or both directly affects our lifestyle and pocketbook, we tend to think it is someone else's problem. The same is true with recycling. There are, however, basically two ways to make us change our habits: if something is easier to use and if it saves us money. To be truly effective, both have to be in play at the same time or we begin to think, "this is too hard" or "this isn't costing me real money." Reducing the number of plastic bags used thru Eco-Bags is both easy and less expensive in the long run.



Kristen Brown's "Eco Bag System"

Kristen Brown began her career in environmentalism at the age of 16 when her father put her in charge of training grocery store clerks in the use of the plastic bag. Her memory of that day was being told "you can't leave this store until you have successfully convinced every cashier that plastic is better than paper." To say that the cashiers, baggers and customers were less than thrilled or cooperative would be an understatement. In fact, Kristen says, "people were just plain mean about it."

Throughout high school and college Kristen spent summers persuading supermarket personnel and consumers that plastic bags were more environmentally friendly than paper.

Today Kristen realizes that the question is not really "plastic or paper." Rather it is Re Use! Her Eco Bag System was designed to be the ultimate in re-useable grocery shopping bags. It is a "four-shopping bag in one storage tote system." They fit perfectly into

a shopping card for loading groceries at checkout (or some use them as they shop to pre-sort). Once filled, they are easy to lift from the cart to car, easy to carry from car to house and then fit together in the storage tote for easy return to the car for next time. It gives the consumer a perfect balance between convenience and protecting the environment. It's organized and simple and can replace between 15 and 30 disposable bags each shopping trip. That translates to eliminating approximately 700 sacks from the waste stream; and saving money for everyone involved.

What would it take for you to re-use? Perhaps instead of the question from the grocery store cashier being "plastic or paper?" it needs to be "did you bring your bag today?" From the consumer side, we need to realize that if we continue our wasteful behavior then our pocketbooks are going to have to pay out more and more. Instead we need to learn to reduce and reuse; recycle only when the other 2 have been done.