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### Diane Armstrong "Over The Hill"

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# Going Green

**Diane Armstrong July 10, 2009**

Posted 3 hours ago

Going Green

I am all in favour of saving the planet, reducing my carbon footprint, saving energy, reducing greenhouse gasses, protecting my environment and going green – up to a point.

Saving money was the impetus to start lowering the thermostat when we weren't in the house and at night. We bought a toaster-oven which uses less electricity for baking small items and felt good about that. It also saved us money on our electric bill.

All the incandescent light bulbs in the house have been changed to those curly ones that are marvellous dust collectors. I don't like fluorescent lighting, but using them gives me a feeling of worthiness, just knowing that I am doing my part to save the planet.

We don't bag our leaves, but mulch them with the mower and leave them to rot on the lawn. Apparently this is good for lawns. It also saves labour. In the spring, our lawn is a sea of blue Forget-me-not flowers, left to seed themselves. They are replaced by yellow Dandelions which, when they die are replaced by orange Indian Paint brush. Regular mowing ensures that each plant's seeds are spread for next year's colourful display.

Vegetable scraps are composted and we compact all our trash. Compaction is done the old fashioned way – by opening boxes and making them flat; by crushing cans and plastic bottles to make them flat too. Newspapers and cardboard are separated from other recyclables. None of this takes much time once it becomes habit.

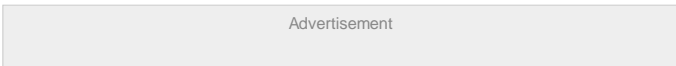
As noble as all these efforts make us feel, there is one area that is beginning to make me worry – a lot. It's panic I feel when I realize that soon there will be no more plastic bags unless I pay for them and guilt for the thousands of bags that I have put in the recycling box. I remember when groceries only came in paper bags and those bags were placed inside the kitchen garbage can. I also remember the bottom falling out of those bags when en route from the kitchen to the outside can. For those born BPB (Before Plastic Bags), can you picture someone's leftover spaghetti dinner, wet coffee grounds and slimy lettuce falling out all over the front steps, or sooner, if you didn't make it that far? What can I use as a substitute for plastic, kitchen garbage bags?

We own a dog. Outside, Tigger leaves behind more than dog hair. What will I use to pick up those dog logs?

Bread was once wrapped in waxed paper. That paper was reused for lunch box sandwiches. Now we buy plastic bags to wrap sandwiches. The bread stays moist – unlike sandwiches wrapped in waxed paper. Celery and carrot sticks stay crisp and moist in a plastic bag. Wrapped in waxed paper, the paper and the veggies both get soggy and limp. What will we use as a substitute?

When I began this column I checked the website, <http://www.reusablebags.com> and learned that there were 255,215,050,001 non-biodegradable plastic bags used so far this year. By the time I finished this column, the total was 256,663,480,905 or more than a million more bags going to a landfill somewhere. If they all went to a depot, they could be recycled. Unfortunately, they blow around, kill wildlife that mistake them for food and leach toxic chemicals into the soil, air and water. Those facts make me feel guilty.

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The plastic bag industry has become a travel agent for guilt trips. I'm going to miss them – if I ever find a good substitute!

That's my view from Over the Hill.

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