

NOVEMBER GREEN TEAM TEACHER RESOURCE REFERENCE

Develop Empathy towards the Earth!

Green Team targets shopping bags!

Paper or plastic? Which is better for the environment?
NEITHER! The fact is that the difference in the effect of recycling paper and plastic bags is small compared to that of reusing bags. Reusing a bag has a big impact; it is one simple thing every person on Earth can do right now to conserve energy and petroleum, reduce landfills, decrease pollution, and prevent harm to wildlife.

Facts:

1. Over 12 million barrels of oil are used to make plastic bags in the United States.
2. Once plastic bags are in the environment it can take several hundreds of years for them to decompose and they contribute toxins to the soil and water as they decompose.
3. Americans throw away almost 100 billion plastic bags each year and only 1% to 3% are recycled.
4. Paper bags are not much better than plastic bags because trees have to be cut down and energy is expended to make these bags.

Suggested Discussion Ideas

How can we reduce the number of shopping bags?

1. Switch to reusable cloth bags. A few retailers in the area offer them: Barnes & Noble, Dominick's, Jewel, Trader Joe's and Whole Foods. Have your reusable bags easily accessible. Keep extra reusable bags in your car/stroller.
2. If you do get paper or plastic bags, reuse them. For instance, a plastic bag over an ice pack in your lunch can help reduce condensation.
3. If you are buying only a few items at the grocery store, don't ask for a bag at all and carry your purchases.

Websites: www.thegreenguide.com;
www.sierraclub.org; www.epa.gov