

I notice Governor Jerry Brown recently signed a bill due to take effect next July that will ban all single-use plastic bags. California has thus passed the first statewide ban on single-use plastic bags, and I hope Governor Brown, who used to be called Governor Moon Beam, is right in saying that we won't be the last. Sure, plastic bags are convenient. But when our local Murphy's market decided to stop using plastic bags a couple of years ago I agreed that it makes sense to reuse the same bag over and over, rather than buy a bag and use it, as ~~its~~^{the} name implies—only once! Now, I'm assuming that when properly disposed of, most plastic bags end up in landfill. That is bad enough, but those pesky little bags often float away to the worst places. E.g.

I spend a lot of time driving up and down our coastal roads, and I often see plastic bags scattered over land and sea. I've seen ~~hundreds~~^{myriad} of them blowing along the Samoa Peninsula on a blustery day, sometimes caught in trees or barbed wire fences. Others blow onto the sand or water.

Sometimes I have the time and good will to pluck the flotsam out of the water ~~or the sand~~, other times, I simply run by. So, today in California, millions of little bags go off into the water to break up into itty-bitsy pieces and get ingested by marine life; others join the ~~myriad~~^{region} of plastics that are afloat in the Pacific Ocean. That's right: there is a swirling bunch of plastic afloat in the Pacific Ocean that some say is bigger than the state of Texas, ~~and others say it's bigger than the continental United States.~~ It's called the Great Pacific Garbage Patch or North Pacific Gyre and it's the result of human carelessness and laziness.

Here are the words of a very smart scientist describing the Great Pacific Garbage Patch:

"The patch is characterized by exceptionally high relative concentrations of pelagic plastics, chemical sludge, and other debris that have been trapped by the currents of the North Pacific Gyre. Despite its enormous size and density (4 particles per cubic meter), the patch is not visible from satellite photography, nor is it necessarily detectable to casual boaters or divers in the area..." (I had to look up that word 'pelagic'; it has nothing to do with Pelagius and denial of original sin, it means 'oceanic'.)

~~A couple of years ago~~ ^{When the local} Murphy's Market banned the plastic bags I immediately bought ~~a few~~^{reusable} of those larger bags and stored them in my car. Problem was, I had acquired bad habits over the years and I rarely remembered to bring in my reusable shopping bag. After a few ~~er~~, many painful experiences forgetting, I started remembering after a few steps out of the car; today I'm getting darn close to remembering every time I step out of the driver's seat to bring my reusable shopping bag. When I ~~do~~^{try to use} the single-use plastic bags to say, buy ~~my~~^{fruit}, I try to use them more than once. My mate ~~says they're messy~~, but hey, what do you want: a messy cupboard or plastic in your fish, oysters and seafood? Old habits tend to die hard, but they have to die if we are going to keep on living on this beautiful parcel of Creation.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment