



# America Recycles Day 2009 Submission Contest

## *Plastic Bag Reducing, Reusing, and Recycling Tips and Ideas*



***The \* indicates selected winners. Thank you to all who submit ideas and tips for the 2009 America Recycles Day Contest. Together we can make a difference, one plastic bag at a time!***

### **Reducing Plastic Bags**

I make sure that I carry a large sturdy canvas tote bags everywhere I go. I use them every where, even if it's just to go to Target ® for clothes or to the library for books. Canvas totes are not just for groceries anymore. I've sewn canvas bags, painted them and given them as thank you gifts to friends. There's nothing worse then seeing baggers load cart after cart with plastic bags that only hold up to 5 items. My totes can carry so much, you can almost not pick them up! Great of staying in shape as well. – Rachel\* *Residential*

Ideas for reducing: have every commercial store that uses plastic bags (even paper) charge \$.10 for every bag used by the customer; have the commercial store give a \$.05 to the customer for every (plastic, paper, canvas) bag the customer brought in and used (this may be for a short period of time, till the customer's behavior has changed, possibly one month); and a sale on all canvas bags should occur simultaneously for one month. – Brian, *Residential*

Years ago, a friend and I agreed that we both like the idea of bringing our own bags and not just to the grocery store but to any store. It was important to us and I found myself committed. Little things have changed over the years to improve my habits, like when I first heard the 3 R's and that the first R is REDUCE and therefore the most important. That meant it was no longer as acceptable to get a plastic bags as long as I would recycle it. It gave me one less out! So if I don't have a bag – I carry the items (sometimes clumsily) or I would buy a reusable bag or I wouldn't shop! . . . My best reminder is to be a good example for others – then maybe your efforts will remind the guy behind you in line to bring his own bag next time! – Cindy, *Residential*





## Reusing Plastic Bags

My grandmother used to collect the plastic bags and use them to make woven rugs. They were durable and great for the entry way into the house. Pretty creative, I think. – Rachel, *Residential*

There are many ways to use plastic bags that are friendly to the environment. . . . A more innovative approach is to use them as packing material. Long, narrow bags such as the ones newspapers are

delivered in can be used when mailing packages thereby cushioning fragile items. Simply blow up the bag and tie off the end. Stuff the blown up bags around the items to be mailed. The bags can be blown up into different sizes to fit the available space. . . . – Kathryn\* *Residential*

Here is a way to recycle EVERY piece of a “box” of wine. Remove the plastic or aluminum foil packaging from the cardboard box. Flatten the cardboard and place under your recycling bin. Cut out the plastic “faucet” and recycle with the recycling material. Rinse and dry the plastic/aluminum liner. It makes a great freezer bag for large meats like chicken . . . or as a bag for ashes from your charcoal grill. – Jane\* *Residential*

The ways I reuse plastic bags include: to hold toiletries, shoes and dirty laundry; to store seasonal decorations; and trash bags at home and in the car. – Karen\* *Employee*

I have reused plastic bags as “planters.” Place soil or potting mixture in the bottom of the plastic bag to be reused. Plant seeds and water. This is a great way to start seeds indoors early in the spring. The bags are watertight and the seedlings can be easily carried outside in the bags when it is time to plant them in the garden. Plants that are being transplanted can also be carried from one place to another in these bags. – Regan\* *Student*

I stumbled on a pattern to make a purse out of plastic bags years ago and the project came out pretty well, though it looks more like an undersized tote. (*The pattern is attached*). – Beth\* *Employee*

I am a dog owner and I use grocery bags to pick up my dog’s waste. My neighbor saves her bags and gives them to me frequently. – Claudia\* *Employee*

We scoop cat waste from the litter into them. I also use them for my daily lunches to go. – Jim, *Resident*

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## Recycling Plastic Bags

Recycle plastic bags that cannot be used anymore due to damage, have them collected at commercial stores. – Brian, *Residential*

Check out all the locations that plastic bags can be recycled and all the many types that can be recycled at: [www.alexandriava.gov/PlasticBags!](http://www.alexandriava.gov/PlasticBags!)

Stacy Herring - *City of Alexandria Residential Recycling Coordinator.*

