

500 plastic shopping bags per person, per year!!!

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The Nevis Solid Waste Management Authority has partnered with a number of Retail Stores on Nevis to promote the use of reusable shopping bags in an effort to reduce the amount of plastic bags in the local waste stream. Retailers participating are, Bargain House, Rams, Super Foods and Best Buy. They have ordered their bags for their customers, the bag will have each supermarket's name, logo and an environmentally friendly message from the Solid Waste Management, endorsing and promoting the use of the reusable shopping bags.

Under the slogan " Bag the Litter problem use reusable Bags", the Department is heightening the awareness of the general public on the introduction of the reusable shopping bags on the island and has launched campaigns in schools, radio and television public service announcements designed to familiarise the public with the practice of utilising reusable shopping bags.

On Friday Nevis joined North America and Europe in promoting the use of reusable bags. Manager of the Solid Waste Department Ms. Carlyn Lawrence explained that the objective of the promotion is to encourage and consistently remind shoppers to practice bringing their own reusable bags when shopping.

"Many of the customers and shoppers will see in their participating supermarket, posters with the caption "bag the litter problem." We have a number of our local supermarkets participating in the program."

She also explained that the purpose of the reusable bag is to assist in reducing the amount of litter that is generated on the island, "where we will take a step forward and instead of one used shopping bag which is the plastic bag, which creates a lot of problems in our society by clogging drains and becoming an eye sore to the landscape of the island.

"We now have a reusable shopping bag that is much more attractive, washable, and durable it will probably take a year of usage before it needs to be replaced." She announced that the bags will be on the island shortly, adding that the bags will be distributed over a 30 day period, "we are hoping to be able to give each household at least 3 bags."

She indicated that once the reusable bags have been circulated throughout the island, a fee will be placed on the plastic bags for those who insist on using them. She also stressed the importance of shoppers making sure that they take their reusable bags along with them to shop. "We want the consumers to understand that the bags are given for them to return to the stores when they shop with their bags."

According to statistics, Nevis alone uses about 6 million plastic bags per year, which equates to approximately 500 plastic bags per person. One plastic bag takes up to 100 years to degrade or rot; rotting plastic bags are toxic to the environment. They contaminate the soil, wind-blown plastic bags choke marine life, clog water ways and spoil the natural beauty of the landscape. Ms. Lawrence said that the department "anticipate and solicit the full cooperation of the shopping public. We are hoping that with the success of this program a number of other retail stores will join in as well."