

Bags the least of our problems

By BRIAN LOCKHART

It's time to go grocery shopping.

For some people that's a big deal.

I've noticed there seems to be three kinds of grocery shoppers. Although I'm sure there are people that somehow fit in the middle and do a form of combination shopping.

First there are the people that plan ahead for an entire week and sometimes longer. They typically do their grocery shopping on the same night every week, at the same time, and at the same store.

I once worked with a woman who fit this criteria. She was my go-to person for a new computer program I was working with and I made the mistake of sticking my head in her office about a minute before quitting time and asking a question.

She looked at me with horror and said "I have to get groceries!" as if my asking a question would disrupt her plan of being at the grocery store at precisely 5:01 p.m. and completing her weekly shopping at 5:45 p.m. so she could arrive at home with the standard 4.5 bags of groceries and start the weekly unloading and shelf filling program to be completed by 5:57 p.m.

These are the people you see going up and down each aisle with a list and checking off each needed item. One missed item could spell household disaster if a box of Captain Crunch was forgotten.

I would imagine people like this are highly organized on a daily and perhaps frightening basis.

The second type of shopper seems to be those that hit the aisles a couple of times each week.

Trip number one gets the staples and a few other items. Trip number two fills in the needs for the week as they arise.

Shopper number three, and this includes me - we are the ones who just don't plan ahead.

Time for dinner? Let's stop in at the grocery store and figure something out.

While these shopping styles all differ, there is one thing in common when you make your way to check-out and are greeted by a friendly cashier.

Let's take a look at a possibly typical stop in the store.

You go to the deli counter and order a few slices of salami and a few slices of cheese. You get both items wrapped in plastic and placed in a little plastic bag.

Off to the dairy section where you pick up some milk. You have three plastic bags full of milk all placed in another plastic bag for you to carry.

You need some hamburgers for tonight's barbecue. You buy a ten-pack of burgers, which are wrapped in plastic and placed inside of a cardboard box.

Of course you can't serve burgers without condiments.

You buy ketchup, mustard, and relish. They all come in plastic bottles.

You have to have some soft drinks to wash down the burgers. You pickup two one litre bottles of Coke and a one liter bottle of something for the person who doesn't like cola ? all in plastic bottles.

Your list is complete and you make your way to the cashier with your shopping cart or little carrying basket, or in my case, juggling it all in your arms.

You need a way to get this pile of food items to your car.

?Sorry, we no longer have plastic bags. They're bad for the environment.?

So a flimsy plastic bag, which actually serves a valuable purpose, is bad for the environment, but the shelves and shelves of plastic bottles, reams of rolls of plastic wrapping, and the little baggies used for holding the salami skate by without a second thought.

Plastic bags may be the evil entity in the 'fight on plastics' in the environmental world, but those thin plastic bags are the least of the worries.

The blown molded plastics industry ? the industry who makes all that packaging and bottles ? reported that in 2019, it was a \$75 billion dollar market. That's a lot of plastic.

It is expected to increase over the next five years.

The history of blown plastic molding has been around since 1938, but it really has been only the past couple of decades where it has become the norm for bottling and packaging operations.

For all you clean living types who drink only bottled water to save the environment, studies show that seven out of every ten plastic water bottles are discarded in the trash or tossed into a ditch somewhere.

Only 30 percent are every recycled. So much for saving the environment.

Your clean living is actually polluting the rivers and oceans with non biodegradable garbage.

The problem with all this plastic is it just won't go away ? ever.

We really need to re-think the packaging industry and worry less about jumping on the bandwagon and blaming the bag industry for what everyone else is doing.