

PLASTIC

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The thicker plastic bags are stronger, which means fewer bags will be required and they can be reused more times.

No bag is free of environmental impact. Consider the whole life cycle of a bag, from how much energy it takes to produce it to what happens when you throw it away.

For example, recycled pa-

per bags biodegrade quickly but they take more energy to produce and transport. A cotton bag needs to be reused 100 times before it uses less energy than a plastic bag, but again, it fully biodegrades.

The use of fossil fuels, a finite resource, to make single-use plastic bags is crazy. Drilling for, or importing, millions of barrels of oil just for a convenient way to carry home groceries just

doesn't make sense, particularly when reusable bags are readily available.

For the past 10 years, I have been using the same Envirosax brand bags. They can be tossed into the washer with the laundry. I can use them anywhere I shop.

Whatever type of bag or basket you decide to use, keep it clean. You don't want to gross out grocery baggers or contaminate your food.

Carrying, and caring

for, reusable bags quickly becomes a habit.

Trash Talk volunteers are putting together workshops on making reusable bags.

For more information, go to Baker City TrashTalk on Facebook @BCTrashTalk and via email at BakerCityTrashTalk@gmail.com

SUNFLOWERS

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It is usually sold as "Mammoth Russian." People eat the roasted seeds; birds like them raw, and visit flower heads in fall and winter. For children, annual sunflowers are big, easy to grow, and bring a sense of great accomplishment.

Sow seeds in spring where plants are to grow. Large-flowered kinds need rich soil and lots of water.

H. multiflorus. Perennial. To 5 feet with thin, toothed, 3- to 8-inch-long leaves and numerous 3-inch-wide flower heads with yellow centers. "Loddon Gold" is a double-flowered variety. Excellent for cutting.

H. salicifolius (H. orgyalis). Perennial. Clumps of tall (3- to 6-inch) stems clothed with long, narrow, drooping leaves carry sheaves of long-stemmed yellow, 2-inch flower heads with brown centers. Endures heat and some drought when established.

H. tuberosus. Jerusalem artichoke. Perennial. Also grown as a commercial crop; tubers are edible and sold in markets as "sunchokes." Plants 6- to 7-feet tall with bright yellow flower heads. Oval leaves 8 inches long.

Spreads readily and can become a pest. Best to harvest tubers every year and save out two or three for replanting. If controlled, makes a good, quick temporary screen or hedge.

Jerusalem Artichoke Soup

2 tablespoons butter
1 cup chopped onion
2 celery stalks, chopped
2 large garlic cloves, chopped
2 pounds Jerusalem artichokes, peeled and chunked
1 quart chicken stock
salt and pepper to taste.

Saute onions and celery in the butter. Add garlic. Saute very quickly. Add broth and chokes. Simmer 45 minutes until chokes are soft. Blend with an emersion blender.

Note: Vegetarian broth may be used instead of chicken broth to make this a vegetarian dish.

Sunchokes can be boiled, roasted or eaten raw. Due to the chemicals contained, eating them raw causes flatulence. This condition is much less by cooking.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write: greengardencolumn@yahoo.com Thanks for reading!

DORY

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The sharp taste touches the brain and you know you can't sweep them up and toss them away.

Bending over is the hard part and squatting down impossible, but this old body bent over and laboriously chased the berries around the kitchen floor, counting them one by one as I did so in picking them up.

Thirty tiny berries in all, plucked up singly by dangling

arms and cramped fingers for the planned breakfast, washed, and added to the bowl of cereal.

How easily and quickly the broom and dustpan could have swept the little berries together and disposed of in the garbage.

Funny how old training kicks in to save and preserve for future pleasure.

Exasperation at one's self but now exercise for the old body in bending from waist to touch the floor with outstretched arm. Exercise for the fingers in retrieving the little

frozen gems. Duty of water washing and draining, then adding to the awaiting bowl.

I sat down with 30 little pieces of fruit floating in milk and cereal, all awaiting my pleasure.

Was it worth it?

Yes, I would say so, in so many ways. It behooved me to be more careful next time (Ha!); my son's hard-earned berries had not gone asunder; the pleasure of eating them was doubly mine; and I appreciated them all over again.

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