

## The New Iowa Flag (Changed without legislative action)

Mrs. Dixie Gebhardt the designer of our Iowa Flag would certainly be bothered to see the title to this column. The flag was officially adopted in 1921. The slogan on that flag is one that we should all remember “Our Liberties We Prize, and Our Rights We Will Maintain”. That phrase certainly did not mean the “right to litter” as it impacts one key liberty that all Iowan’s prize - a beautiful and generally clean countryside.



No matter where you walk or drive in Iowa, it seems to have become a common sight to see the all too familiar plastic bag, either caught in the taller plants, fences, shrubs or the trees. This situation has led me to coin the phrase – “Iowa’s new un-official flag”. Those plastic bags (frequently joined by other forms of plastic film) flying in the breeze, have become far more common than our official State Flag. Without legislative action they may soon become the flag like symbol that Iowa will be known for.

### **Insert your own local photo of plastic “blowing in the wind”.**

How often have we been in a store or shop and the clerk puts our purchase (even though it is a single item) into a plastic bag. Many of us tell the clerk not to put it in a bag, however, a larger number seem to take the bag and item out of the building and either on the way to the car take the item out and let the bag fly. In other cases – they get to the vehicle and the passenger (or driver) takes the item out of the bag, lowers the window and throws the bag out to blow across the lot and become trapped in the taller plants, fences, shrubs or trees.

Lets all take action to honor the original work and commitment of Mrs. Gebhardt in the design of the official Iowa flag. We all take pride in that flag – make sure the plastic bag does not take its place (even if unofficially). Begin your actions and change your behavior patterns. You can help by:

Taking your own carry bag to the store when shopping for smaller items.  
Asking the clerk not to give you a plastic bag and if a small number, carry your items.  
If you take a plastic bag – simply wait until you are home and can dispose of it properly in your recycling program.

Don't tolerate those that are throwing out the plastic bags.  
Train your children and grandchildren in the same way.

With your help we can keep the "real" Iowa Flag flying.

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See you in the next column.

*Helping to Keep Iowa Beautiful*

Gerald F. Schnepf, Executive Director