

Recycling Plastic in Western Massachusetts



Which Plastics are Recyclable? Why?

Recycling plastics can be confusing. The chasing arrows (or triangle) with a number in the center is a code that identifies the plastic resin type. This code is used by plastics manufacturers but it DOES NOT necessarily mean the plastic is recyclable.

Seven basic resin types are used to make thousands of different kinds of plastics. Dyes and other additives are added to the basic resin to give the final product a desired color, shape, and texture. These additives, along with the way that plastics are formed, impact the ability to recycle the plastic. Recycled plastics must be carefully sorted by type before they can be melted down and reformed into new products. Placing your plastics in the recycling bin is just the beginning of the long process of sorting and reprocessing in order to recycle plastics.

Recycling companies collect the plastic types that have sufficient market value to cover the costs of collection, processing, and transportation to markets. In western Massachusetts, most plastic bottles and containers meet these criteria.

Some plastics that can't be recycled in municipal recycling programs, such as polystyrene (Styrofoam) and plastic bags, have limited markets and present haulers and processors with logistical challenges. Wind easily blows these lightweight plastics, creating litter problems; they require large amounts of storage space; and they get tangled up in processing equipment.

Plastics larger than 2.5 gallons in size can't be recycled because they do not fit through the processing equipment at the recycling facility. Small plastic pill bottles, on the other hand, are too small to be recycled and fall through the processing equipment, potentially damaging the equipment and creating a safety hazard.

Which Plastics *Can I* Recycle?



Think Bottles and Containers!

- ▶ All plastic food and beverage bottles
- ▶ Most plastic food containers
- ▶ Most other plastic bottles under 2½ gallons in size

Just a few exceptions:

- ▶ Styrofoam cups and trays and microwave trays are not recyclable.
- ▶ If the bottle contained motor oil, antifreeze, pesticides, herbicides, adhesives, paints, or solvents, it cannot be recycled. The residue from motor oil and chemicals seeps into the plastic and contaminates it.

Ideas for Reducing or Reusing Plastics

- ▶ Styrofoam can be tough to avoid, but not impossible. Bring your own mug with you to get hot and cold drinks. Try to avoid deli items packaged on Styrofoam trays.
- ▶ Look for products in the least amount of packaging.

- ▶ Try to reduce the need to throw away plastics. For example, use reusable shopping bags. Don't accept a bag if you don't need one. Some stores sell cooking oils, liquid soaps, and detergents in bulk; refill your own container.
- ▶ Reuse plastic produce bags at home.
- ▶ Reuse plastic containers at home or make them into something else.
- ▶ If you must buy a plastic product, choose one made of recycled plastic—this will help strengthen markets for recycling plastics.
- ▶ Many local mailing service stores, and some small businesses, accept foam packing peanuts for reuse. Check the yellow pages under “mailing services” or “shipping services” for the one closest to you. Be sure to call first to confirm that the store will accept them.
- ▶ Some local stores will accept plastic bags for recycling. If your grocery store doesn't accept plastic bags, ask them to start. Many area secondhand and used books stores will accept bags for reuse. If you use a dry cleaner, ask if they will reuse their bags.
- ▶ When you purchase new plants, ask your garden center about returning the plastic pots.

Styrofoam and TechnoTrash Recycling

- ▶ Foam blocks, like the packaging typically used to secure electronics or appliances in shipping, are called “expanded polystyrene molders” or EPS. Clean, uncontaminated EPS packaging can be dropped off or mailed to:

Tegant Corporation
 29 Park Road
 Putnam, CT 06260
 860-928-7795

The EPS should be free from any significant dirt, tape, or other contaminants and should be marked with the plastics symbol #6 (in the triangle or chasing arrows). Foodservice items are not accepted—only foam block packaging. The consumer is responsible for the shipping fees. *There are no local outlets for reusing polystyrene blocks.*

- ▶ GreenDisk accepts a wide range of “technotrash,” including diskettes, print cartridges, cell phones, and all forms of electronic media and cases. GreenDisk destroys private data and recycles everything. Call 1-800-305-3475 or visit www.greendisk.com. The two options GreenDisk offers for individuals are the “Technotrash Pack-IT Service” and the “GreenDisk Technotrash Can.” Both options have an associated fee.



Do Recycle these kinds of empty plastic bottles and containers

Kitchen

Milk, water, juice, and soda bottles
Yogurt containers
Cooking oil bottles
Syrup, ketchup, other condiments
Peanut butter jars
Margarine and butter tubs
Clear clamshell packaging



Household Cleaners

Liquid dish soap
Liquid household cleaner bottles



Bathroom

Liquid hand soap
Shampoo and conditioner
Mouthwash
Lotions
Pump hair sprays
Vitamin bottles



Laundry

Liquid laundry detergent
Bleach (rinse well)
Liquid fabric softener



At home and on the go

Soft drinks
Iced tea
Sports drinks
Water



Preparation Instructions

Put pumps in the trash.
Empty all liquids.
Rinse plastics clean.
Put cap back on.



Do not put recyclables in plastic bags!

Don't Recycle these kinds of plastics

Packaging

Polystyrene (Styrofoam)
Cups, utensils, straws
Plastic or Styrofoam egg cartons
Meat, cheese, or cookie trays
Microwave trays or containers
Packing peanuts or blocks
Black plastic trays or containers
Plastic bags, wrap, packaging, or film ("cling wrap")

Yard and Garden

Plastic swimming pools, lawn furniture
Flower or plant pots
Black plastic

Household

Toys
Plastic coat hangers
Decorative light holders
Plastics from electronics or appliances
Pails, buckets, clothes hampers, or recycling bins
CDs, video tapes, cassettes, or cases
Medical supplies

Other

Pumps (from liquid hand soap, for example)
Jugs/pails over 2.5 gallons in size
Small prescription pill bottles
Bottles that contained motor oil, other automotive products, poison, pesticides, solvent, adhesive, paint, or other chemicals