

You Might Not Be Recycling as Well as You Think



Many of us love to recycle. We feel good about properly disposing of recyclable items and doing something good for the planet. But unfortunately, many of our recycling bins contain contaminants. Making small changes in our day-to-day habits can make a huge difference in the way we recycle to help contribute to a solution.

According to a recent national survey, about 22% of Americans report not having enough recycling information, and about 18% aren't sure what can and cannot be recycled. By learning what we shouldn't throw in the bin, we can change our habits and ensure that some of the waste really gets a chance at a second life. Here are some of the most common contaminants in Easton residents' bins:

Problem 1: Plastic Bags

Hearing the word "plastic" immediately makes people think "recyclable!" Although they can be recycled at participating retail stores (such as ShopRite, Kohls, Stop & Shop and Caraluzzi's, which all have boxes for plastic bag recycling near their entrances), they are a major contaminant at our region's recycling facility. When plastic bags enter their systems, they can jam the machinery endangering the workers. When a plastic bag gets jammed, the entire facility must stop moving to fix the problem, wasting time and

energy.

Solutions: By bringing plastic bags to the above-mentioned retail stores, they can be safely recycled. To find more information about drop-off locations, plastic bag products and the nearest locations to you, you can visit how2recycle.info

Problem 2: Food Waste and Unwashed Containers

Hovering over the recycling bin, you might often find yourself wondering “is this clean enough to put in?” The truth is that food residue can spoil the entire load of recycling, making it unusable.

Solutions: By quickly rinsing containers that you plan to recycle, you remove any stickiness and cross-contamination and ensure that the material can be properly processed and reused. You may also consider composting as a way to dispose of food waste.

Problem 3: Moisture

Another major recycling contaminant is excess moisture. If liquid is left in recycled items, it can saturate otherwise good items like paper and cardboard. Also, an overstuffed recycling cart that causes the lid to remain open on a rainy night will likely ruin the entire load. When cardboard is too wet, significant problems occur: it can get moldy, it can become too heavy, and it can become impossible to separate from the other items in the single stream. So not only is the cardboard unusable, but the rest of the recycling may become contaminated as well.

Solutions: Be sure to allow recycling items to air dry before throwing them into the bin, and ensure your cart’s lid is fully shut when outside.

Problem 4 and Beyond

There are a number of items that may seem recyclable but actually aren't. These items include: garden hoses, k cups, plastic cutlery, window glass, styrofoam, concrete, ceramics and paper plates. Sometimes items might seem recyclable because they're plastic or they have a recycling symbol on them. But not everything is recyclable here in CT.

Solutions: Sometimes it's hard to know "what's in" and "what's out" when it comes to recycling, and many folks assume or wish that things are recyclable. Or perhaps they assume the non-recyclable items will get easily sorted out at the recycling facility. But the truth is that this "wish-cycling" contaminates otherwise good recyclables and can even endanger the workers at the plant.

What to Do?

Recycling begins with you! Avoiding these contaminants and following these solutions will only work to make our planet a better and more sustainable place. For more information on recycling, you can visit [RecycleCT](#) which provides answers to commonly asked questions and the latest news when it comes to recycling in Connecticut. Be on the lookout for more tips on recycling coming to the Courier and your recycling bin this summer.