

Don't Recycle Those Black Plastic Takeout Food Containers



Next time you order takeout, be sure to throw the black containers in the trash instead of your recycling bin.

The black plastic containers might seem recyclable, as they do have a recycling triangular arrow logo on the bottom, but beginning last year they are no longer accepted in Connecticut's mixed recycling program.

In June 2021, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection decided that black plastic containers should be taken off the IN list and moved to the OUT list. Black plastic items include mushroom, and frozen food trays and nursery/plant pots.



Black plastic containers are no longer recycled in Connecticut

“Black plastic containers were not moved to the “NO” list lightly,” Sherill Baldwin, an environmental analyst for the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection stated in an email

The reason that Sherill along with the DEEP official are pushing Connecticut residents to stop recycling the containers is because black plastic is a contaminant in the recycling stream, which “costs municipalities and residents money in addition to reducing the value of the commodities coming out of our (Materials Recovery Facilities) MRFs .”

Green Matters also states that “Since black plastic is non-recyclable, it most likely ends up in a landfill, whether it was directly trashed by a consumer or it found its way there inadvertently through the recycling stream.”

Sherill outlined that the DEEP’s Materials Recovery Facilities have been struggling to keep up with manually removing these black plastic containers at the front of the line, as they have seen an influx of these containers since the start of the pandemic. This is due to the increase in people ordering takeout and putting these containers in their recycling bin, unaware of the change in Connecticut’s recycling guidelines.

The DEEP is currently working with municipal recycling coordinators to get the message out to the residents. Their staff also provides recycling workshops to educate residents

on what materials can and cannot be recycled in Connecticut.

JR Bria, head of operations of Residential Waste Systems, which recycles Easton's trash, said most residents are conditioned to recycle their trash. So, when they see the recycling label on the black containers they put them in the recycling bin by habit.

"Consumers just want to do the right thing, but sometimes they end up over recycling," Bria said.

He said the best way to be certain an item can be recycled is to check the website

[RecycleCT.com](https://www.RecycleCT.com), which lists what materials can be recycled. The website has an update telling residents that "Since 2021, black plastic containers, including take-out, mushroom, and frozen food trays and nursery/plant pots are not accepted in CT's mixed recycling program. Thank you for putting black plastic containers in the trash."