

Recycling Made Easier (Commingled Recycling)

What can be recycled in Scarsdale can sometimes be confusing. This is the first article in a series of articles on WHAT and HOW to recycle in Scarsdale.

Our Sanitation Department does a great job of making our waste disappear so it's easy not to think about it, but it all has to go somewhere. Instead of ending up as garbage that is burned just 30 minutes from Scarsdale, most items we use every day can be recycled and turned into something new while generating revenue for our County.

Every additional item that is recycled keeps our air, land and water safer, lessens the need to manufacture products from scratch, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. With a little effort and armed with a little knowledge, we can individually and collectively make a big difference!

This article is a comprehensive guide to **Commingled Recycling - Plastic, Glass, Metal, & Cartons**. To read other CAC sustainability articles, [click here](#).

To ask further questions, please contact the Scarsdale Conservation Advisory Council using the [online contact form](#).

Commingled Recycling (Plastic, Glass, Metal, Cartons)

* Containers should be **emptied and rinsed** (see FAQ). You can **include caps and lids**. *

PLASTICS

ACCEPTED ITEMS: Any plastic coded #1 - #7 (except NO plastic bags, Styrofoam, or big, bulky items - even if numbered)



HOW TO DISPOSE OF NON-ACCEPTED PLASTIC:

- ALL plastic bags, Saran wrap, bubble wrap, air pillows: Trash or store recycle bins (FAQ)
- Styrofoam (even coded #6, see FAQ), vinyl, diapers, utensils, and straws: Trash
- Very large items such as very large plastic toys: Donate or curbside Bulky Trash
- Empty containers that held hazardous material: Trash (see FAQ)

GLASS

ACCEPTED ITEMS: Glass bottles and jars for food & drinks (any color)



HOW TO DISPOSE OF NON-ACCEPTED GLASS OR GLASS-LIKE ITEMS:

- Glass vases, Pyrex, drinking glasses, ceramics, plate glass, candle jars: donate or trash
- Light bulbs: LED & Incandescent (trash); CFL (recycle at vendors, see FAQ)

METALS

ACCEPTED ITEMS: Metal food & drink cans, aerosol cans, aluminum foil & foil pans, and screw-top metal lids (separated from glass jars)



HOW TO DISPOSE OF NON-ACCEPTED METALS:

- Metal hangers: dry cleaners, scrap metal bin at Scarsdale Recycling Center, or trash
- Batteries: Non-rechargeable (trash), rechargeable (big box stores, see FAQ)
- Bulky metal (e.g. water heater): leave at curb on bulk pickup day (2nd trash day of week)
- Other metal (keys, pipes, knobs, nails, etc): scrap metal bin at Scarsdale Recycling Center
- Empty containers that held hazardous material: Trash (see FAQ)

CARTONS (NEW!!!)

ACCEPTED ITEMS: Refrigerated milk and juice cartons, juice boxes, and ice cream cartons



Commingled Recycling FAQs

COLLECTION: Why can't we place recycling in plastic bags for pickup? Plastic bags jam the sorting machines at the recycling center so recycling needs to be placed LOOSE in our bins. If worried about your bin getting dirty, you can line it with a large bag that stays in the bin.

RINSING CONTAINERS: Do I have to clean my containers before recycling? Food residue should be removed and containers should be briefly rinsed but they don't need to be sparkling clean. The recycling process can handle a little residue but rinsing keeps everything neater.

PLASTIC BAGS: Are plastic bags with recycling number signs accepted? No, not in the County program. But clean soft, thin film plastic, such as plastic bags (grocery, bread, cereal, garbage, newspaper, dry cleaner, Ziploc, etc.); Saran wrap; bubble wrap, air pillows, and packaging wrap may be recycled through supermarkets/large box stores which are required to have bins. [Click here for more information on plastic bag recycling](#)

PLASTIC BAGS: Can we get a plastic bag recycling bin at the Scarsdale Recycling Center? Our County does not currently process plastic bags and Scarsdale cannot meet the minimum volume required to recycle privately. The Scarsdale CAC will continue to look into options.

PLASTIC CODES: What does the number inside the triangle recycling symbol mean? It denotes the type of plastic that the container is made of and can aid recyclers in the sorting process. Westchester accepts all numbers (#1 -#7) EXCEPT Styrofoam (even if #6) and plastic bags.

STYROFOAM: Why is Styrofoam not accepted, even when coded #6? Municipal recycling programs rarely accept Styrofoam for recycling due to the difficulty in processing, transporting and recycling Styrofoam. Some shipping stores ([more info](#)) accept loose fill peanuts. The most waste-conscious option is to avoid Styrofoam whenever possible.

CARTONS: Why are cartons put in commingled recycling when they look more like paper? Beverage cartons are lined with a thin film of plastic to make them leak-proof so they go through a different recycling process than regular paper/cardboard. The same equipment used to sort other commingled items is used to sort the cartons so they are processed together.

LIGHTBULBS: Why do different bulbs have different disposal requirements? Incandescent bulbs and LEDs may go in trash or be recycled through some retailers. However, fluorescent tubes and CFLs contain mercury which is toxic. Large home improvement stores typically accept CFLs ([more info](#)) but not fluorescent tubes which should be brought to the County Hazardous Materials depot ([link](#)).

METAL: What if I have an item that is part metal (like a broken scissor with plastic handle)? If the metal can be separated, it may be placed in the scrap metal bin at the Recycling Center and the plastic placed in recycling or trash; otherwise, the whole item should be placed in trash.

BATTERIES: How do I dispose of batteries? Regular (non-rechargeable) batteries go into trash. Rechargeable batteries contain toxic materials and should be brought to big box electronic stores that have rechargeable battery recycling bins, not placed in trash.

HAZARDOUS ITEMS: What's considered "hazardous?" Materials such as pesticides, herbicides, stains, kerosene, automotive fluids, solvents, and pool chemicals are considered hazardous. Empty containers used for such hazardous materials should go into the trash, even if empty. Full or partial containers with hazardous material should be brought to the County Hazardous Materials depot ([link](#)). Household cleaners are not considered hazardous and these empty containers can go into recycling if coded #1-7. [Click for a list of hazardous materials.](#)

General FAQs

What happens to our garbage? Household garbage is brought to a County incinerator 30 minutes north of Scarsdale, where it is burned and generates electricity. The County has controls in place to minimize the negative environmental impact, but there are unavoidable toxic by-products. Residual toxins are emitted into the air and hazardous ashes must be buried in landfills. Recycling helps to reduce these negative environmental impacts.

How does recycling help? Every additional item that is recycled keeps our air, land and water safer; reduces use of fossil fuels; lessens greenhouse gas emissions; and enables us to turn items we no longer use into something new while generating revenue for our County.

What happens with our recyclables? Our recyclables are brought to the County's Material Recovery Facility in Yonkers, where they are sorted, bundled into bales, and sold on the open market to manufacturers who turn our recyclables into new products.

What determines what recyclables are accepted? Not all plastics, glass, metals, or paper products are the same. Even if they look similar, raw materials can be different, or they may require different processing equipment due to materials or shape. The County specifies what is accepted based on what it's able to process and what it's able to sell.

Why are commingled and paper/cardboard collected separately? Processing them separately yields a much higher quality recycling stream which helps ensure our recyclables are sold and turned into new items.

I've read about towns throwing out their recycling. Is this happening here? NO! Our dual-stream recycling system and residents' efforts to minimize contamination have ensured all our recycling is sold and turned into new products even as other municipalities have had difficulties.

Additional Recycling Resources:

- Scarsdale Recycling Guide: [LINK](#)
- Yonkers Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) video: [LINK](#)
- Scarsdale Sanitation Dept: publicworks@scarsdale.com or 914.722.1294 (Mon-Sat, 8a-3p)
- Westchester County Recycling Helpline: 914.813.5425 (Mon-Sun, 9a-7p)