



Tips On Recycling in Westchester County

Bronxville's trash is trucked 30 miles north to Peekskill, where it is burned in the giant Wheelabrator waste-to-energy facility that is used by many county municipalities. The toxic ash that remains is sent to landfills. Given the enormous cost and energy required to run this system, it benefits us all to reduce the amount of garbage we produce by reducing, reusing, and recycling. The county's goal is to reduce the trash generated per person per day to an average of .6 pounds by 2030. The 2018 average was 3.9 pounds. If we all pitch in, we can achieve this ambitious goal!

The county has an excellent recycling system. County officials confirm that what is collected is recycled. According to the 2018 Annual Report, Westchester recovered 70,635 tons of waste through its curbside collection program; the sale of that material generated \$4.2 million in revenue. For the report: <http://environment.westchestergov.com/recycling>

You can improve your recycling habits by learning the fine points of what can and cannot be recycled in Westchester.

Recycling rules can be confusing and it's helpful to review them regularly.

The village website offers answers to specific questions: <https://www.villageofbronxville.com/public-works/pages/sanitation>.

Or check out <http://environment.westchestergov.com/>. Their recycling hotline 914 813 5425 is a good place to start, but you might need to dig deeper for complete answers. The Green Committee has spent some time doing just that, and offers the following info and advice.

*Many Bronxville businesses support recycling items associated with their services. Wondering about flower vases, used sneakers, or the plastic containers your nursery plants came in? Ask sales clerks at appropriate stores whether they will accept these items for reuse.

*Keep the lids on glass and plastic recyclables when you throw them loose into your mixed recyclables container.

*Don't put your mixed recyclables (plastic, glass, and metal) in plastic bags; they muck up the machinery. Just place the items loose in the bin.

*You can recycle a milk carton with a triangular shaped top. It's called a gable top container; rinse first and if you can, remove and trash the plastic screw top and "knob" surround.

*You can recycle shelf-stable boxes such as those that contain juice, chopped tomatoes, and soup. They're called aseptic containers; rinse them thoroughly and again, if possible, remove and trash the plastic bits.

*All cardboard can be recycled; just flatten it. That includes egg cartons made from cardboard.

*Don't forget you can recycle thin plastic grocery bags, dry cleaning bags, newspaper sleeves, bread bags, and other thin or film plastic in special bins at large retail stores, including grocery stores such as Acme. Look for the bin outside the store. For more info: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/50042.html>

*Remove the cellophane windows of envelopes before recycling them.

*Yes, you can recycle aluminum foil, aluminum trays too. Wash and place them with mixed recyclables. But before you recycle, consider reusing them. It takes lots energy to produce aluminum products.

*How about metal clothes hangers? Can't be recycled. Return them to your dry cleaners.

*Old paint cans? Fill them with kitty litter until no liquid remains, then place them in regular trash.

*Aerosol cans? Can be recycled, if completely empty.

*Wrapping paper is not recyclable. The coatings and special inks used to make it preclude recycling. Consider using newspaper and plain brown wrapping paper (adding a pretty ribbon or other decoration can dress up your gift). Ribbon is also not recyclable.

*Americans waste up to 40% of the food produced, which has a huge environmental impact. By becoming more mindful, you can learn to buy only what you need, make more effort to use up what you have, and fill your plate only with what you will eat. Make it a habit to bring left-overs home from restaurants.

*If you have a good-sized yard, you can compost your food scraps at home. Or you can let the Bronxville Green Committee know that you would support a food scrap collection site in the village. Share your thoughts at bvillegreencommittee@gmail.com.

*Looking to recycle other items? These sites may help: www.earth911.com and <https://www.terracycle.com/en-US/> But be careful: for rules specific to Westchester, the county government website and hotline are your best sources of information.

*Plastic is made with fossil fuels; it breaks down into micro-pieces that are being incorporated into living flesh, with unknown health effects. So far, a very small percentage of the plastic produced is recycled. Consider buying items made of glass, metal or a biodegradable material instead of plastic. And when you do buy plastic, be sure to recycle it. Bronxville can recycle plastics 1-7. See above for info on thin or film plastic, which is NOT collected at the curb but can be recycled when left in special bins outside retail establishments.

*All electronics include toxic materials and by law, must be disposed of properly. Return used electronics to the manufacturer when possible, hand them in on Bronxville Take Back Days, or make an appointment to deliver them to the Hazardous Materials Recovery Facility in Valhalla. Westchester county ensures that all electronics collected are dismantled in this country in an environmentally sensitive manner. Go to environment.westchestergov.com for a thorough explanation of this issue. Electronic waste is the fastest growing area of solid waste in the U.S. as more and more household items contain electronic components.

*Donate: It's easier to throw stuff out, but it's better for everyone if you donate lightly used items. The Reformed Church of Bronxville accepts gently used clothing, books and bric-a-brac. The Bronxville Public Library accepts used books on specific days. Take Back Day held at the Town Hall twice a year accepts electronics and other items. Many other area organizations accept donations.

*Every purchase you make has an end of life. The more you consider where that product will end up when its life is over, the more likely you are to choose wisely when buying it.

*Finally, remember New York State's motto: reduce, reuse, recycle.

*As a last resort, when in doubt, throw it out.

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