Organics recycling basics

Hennepin County Environment and Energy
What is organics recycling?

• You collect food scraps, non-recyclable paper and compostable products around your home

• These materials are picked up by a waste hauler and delivered to an industrial compost site

• The organic material are recycled into compost, a nutrient-rich soil-like materials that can be used in gardens and landscaping projects
Why is it important?

• Best opportunity to reduce our trash

• Puts our trash to better use by recycling it into a valuable resource

• Improves soil and protects the environment

• Supports a local economy
Organics are the most common material in the trash

Hennepin County 2016 residential waste sort data shows that nearly 25% of household trash is material accepted for organics recycling.
How do I get started?

- Learn how your program works
  - Check with your city or hauler for details
  - Find out what is provided: an extra cart, compostable bags, supplies to get started?
  - Are there extra fees, or are you already paying for the service?

- Sign up and get the supplies you need to participate
What is accepted for organics recycling?

• All food
• Non-recyclable and food-soiled paper
• Certified compostable products
• Other compostable household items
What is accepted for organics recycling?

- All food
  - Fruits and vegetables
  - Meat, fish and bones
  - Eggs and egg shells
  - Pasta, beans and rice
  - Bread and cereal
  - Nuts and shells
What is accepted for organics recycling?

• Non-recyclable and food-soiled paper
  • Pizza boxes from delivery
  • Napkins and paper towels
  • Paper egg cartons
What is accepted for organics recycling?

• Certified compostable products
  • Certified compostable paper and plastic cups, plates, bowls, utensils and containers

• Looks for the BPI or Cedar Grove logos or the term “compostable” on certified products
What is accepted for organics recycling?

- Other compostable items
  - Coffee grounds and filters
  - Hair and nail clippings
  - Cotton balls and swabs with paper stems
  - Houseplants and flowers
  - Tea bags
  - Wooden item such as chopsticks, popsicle sticks and toothpicks
What is **not** accepted?

- Keep these items out of the organics recycling:
  - Animal and pet waste, litter or bedding
  - Cleaning or baby wipes
  - Diapers and sanitary products
  - Dryer sheets
  - Grease or oil

- Plastic bags and Styrofoam
- Products labeled “biodegradable”
- Recyclable items, including cartons, glass, metal, paper and plastic
- Yard waste (depending on your program)
How does organics recycling work?

• The organics you collect at home are:
  • Picked up by hauler
  • Delivered to a large-scale, industrial compost site
At the compost site, the organics are:

- Mixed with yard waste to get the correct ratio of carbon and nitrogen and the right moisture levels
- Laid out in piles
- Aerated to introduce oxygen
- Left to compost and cure – a 6 or so month process in which bacteria is working to heat the pile and break down materials
Before it’s ready...

• The compost is screened to remove contaminants

• Common contaminants include:
  • Plastic bags and wrap
  • Small plastic items
  • Glass
Finished compost is used in a variety of projects, such as:

- School gardens
- Road construction
- Landscaping projects and community events
Learn more
www.hennepin.us/residents/recycling-hazardous-waste/organics-recycling