

## **How to Recycle Right in Fairfax County Info**

Fairfax County recently hosted a webinar about how to recycle right in Fairfax County. The recording may be seen here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vswkifBCteY>

Important information from the webinar affecting our community is highlighted below:

### **Glass:**

Glass is not collected in single stream recycling, but consumers can still recycle their glass by taking it to the I-66 Transfer Station, the I-95 Landfill, or to any Purple Bin location. There are now 35 purple bin locations throughout the area, and our closest location is in the parking lot of the Providence Community Center on Vaden Drive. The glass-recycling program has been a huge success, and the County has recycled 17 million lbs. of glass so far.

The glass bottles and containers are crushed and used in various projects around the County, including construction, sewer rehab projects, waterline pipe repairs, and storm water projects. Whereas before, the County would have to obtain gravel and sand mined and brought in from other locations, they are now able to make use of the crushed glass that is collected locally from the Purple Can Club.

As an update, there is now a company utilizing the crushed glass and turning it into post consumer glass products, so there is now a glass-to-glass application of the used bottles and containers.

### **Do not use plastic bags for recyclables.**

Recyclables are sent to materials recovery facilities where they are sorted, and plastic bags get hung up in the machines, creating a problem by slowing down the sorting process. Instead, recyclables should be placed **clean and loose** in a collection bin.

Plastic grocery shopping bags, bubble wrap, and the flexible type of plastic used for packaging pillows, etc., can be taken to grocery stores collection sites for recycling. They should **not** be placed in recycling bins for curbside collection.

### **Recycling Plastics:**

**Only plastics #1, #2, and #5 are accepted.** All other plastic is not currently recyclable here and should be thrown away in the trash. (What dictates this is the market to which the plastics can be sold.) Placing other numbered plastics in the recycling bin is “wishful recycling”, which only slows down the sorting process and adds to the cost of recycling.

If you want caps on bottles to get recycled, leave them **ON** the bottle. This makes it easier to collect them during the sorting process, otherwise they are too small and will get filtered out of the single stream material, considered debris, and be thrown away. Once the plastics are separated, however, since the bottle caps are made of a different type of plastic, they will float in water, where they can be siphoned off and recycled.

As consumers, if you would like to take action to help more plastics be recycled, you can take action by contacting the companies that make plastic-packaged products and demand that they use post-consumer recycled plastic, or plastics that can be recycled.

### **Use Paper Bags for Yard Debris**

After yard debris is collected, it is taken to either the I-66 Transfer Station or the I-95 Landfill, where it is shredded and composted.

Because paper leaf/lawn bags can easily be shredded along with the yard debris, it is recommended that residents use them, (or rigid containers), rather than plastic bags for yard debris collection. Plastic bags make the process more time consuming and costly because they must be manually opened and removed, or else they get hung up in the shredders. Yard waste includes grass clippings, leaves, straw, flowers, small prunings, and brush (i.e., branches and twigs smaller than 4-feet in length) -- so no rocks, sod, or other materials should be included.

### **New Food Scraps Program:**

Did you know that approximately 30% of a residence's trash is food scraps?

Turning food scraps into compost is a way to keep it out of the landfill.

Fairfax County has just started a food scraps/compost program, and residents can collect their food scraps and take them to either the I-66 Transfer Station or the I-95 Landfill.

Not all food is suitable for compost, but here is a link information about which are:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news2/compost-your-food-waste/>

### **Oyster Shell Recycling:**

There is also a new program for oyster shell recycling, where the County is collecting oyster shells from restaurants and replenishing them back to the Chesapeake Bay.

Natural oyster shell is the preferred material for oyster larvae to attach and grow, so recycling the shells and bringing them back to the Bay encourages the oyster population to be restored. Residential consumers of oysters can bring their shells to either the I-66 Transfer Station or the I-95 Landfill for recycling.