

Organics Recycling Guide



All food

- Fruits and vegetables
- Meat, fish and bones
- Dairy products
- Eggs and egg shells
- Pasta, beans and rice
- Bread and cereal
- Nuts and shells



Food-soiled paper

- Pizza boxes from delivery
- Napkins and paper towels
- Paper egg cartons



Certified compostable products

- Compostable paper and plastic cups, plates, bowls, utensils and containers



Look for the term “compostable” or the BPI logo on certified products.



Other compostable household items

- Coffee grounds and filters
- Hair and nail clippings
- Cotton balls and swabs with paper stems
- Houseplants and flowers
- Wooden items such as chopsticks, popsicle sticks and toothpicks



Organics are a resource, not a waste!

Organics recycling creates a cycle that puts our trash to better use. Here’s how it works:

1. You separate your food waste and other compostable items into an organics container in your home.
2. You put your organics, bagged in certified compostable bags, into your cart.
3. Your hauler picks up your organics recycling and brings it to a commercial composting facility, where the materials are turned into nutrient-rich compost.
4. Compost is used in gardens and at farms to add nutrients to the soil to help plants grow.



Keep non-compostable materials out



Receiving organics free of contamination allows local composters to produce clean, nutrient-rich compost that people want to purchase and use.

Some of the most important items to keep out of the organics recycling because they cause the biggest issues are:

- Glass
- Plastic items, including produce stickers, utensils, and Styrofoam™
- Plastic-coated paper items like coffee and soda cups
- Fast food wrappers and condiment packets
- To-go containers that are not certified compostable or only say ‘biodegradable’
- Diapers, menstrual products, and cleaning wipes
- Grease or oil

If you aren’t sure if an item is compostable, put it in the trash.

Setting up organics recycling at home



Organics are a resource, not a waste! By participating in organics recycling, your food scraps and non-recyclable paper products are put to better use by being turned into compost – a valuable resource used in landscaping, gardening, and road construction projects.

This guide includes helpful tips and answers to common questions to help you get started with collecting organics at home.



Getting started with organics recycling

1. Select an indoor collection container

There are many options for containers you can use to collect organics in your home. Some you may already have, such as an ice cream pail, coffee can, or waste container. Or you can purchase a kitchen pail from a grocery, hardware, retail, or online store.



2. Focus on collecting food

Spoiled food and food scraps are the most common material in the trash, and the most nutrient-rich material in the composting process, which makes them the most important material to start collecting for organics recycling.



Keep a pail or other small container for collecting organics in a convenient location in your kitchen, such as on your counter or under the sink.

All food is accepted for organics recycling. This includes scraps from food prep, inedible parts of food like shells or bones, leftovers, and spoiled or stale food from your fridge and cupboards.

In addition to food scraps, you can also put napkins, paper towels, paper egg cartons, coffee grounds, certified compostable products, plant trimmings, and wooden items like chopsticks and popsicle sticks in the organics recycling.

3. Put your bagged organics in your cart



Put your organics in either brown paper bags or BPI certified compostable plastic bags before putting them in your cart. This helps to prevent a mess in the cart. Larger items such as pizza boxes from delivery and paper egg cartons do not need to be bagged.

A note about compostable bags



Although organics must be bagged when placed into your cart, you can choose whether to line your indoor collection container with a compostable bag or wait to put organics in a bag right before you bring them out to your cart.

If you are purchasing compostable plastic bags, remember that there are many different brands available. Compostable plastic bags are sold at most grocery, hardware, and large retail stores. If you've used a bag that didn't work well for you, try another brand. Remember to look for bags that are BPI certified compostable plastic bags.



More about compostable products

Paper and plastic plates, bowls, cups, containers, and utensils that are certified compostable are accepted for organics recycling. Certified compostable products must have the term "compostable" or the BPI logo on them to be accepted.

Paper items that have a shiny or smooth surface, such as coffee cups, to-go containers, and ice cream tubs, likely have a plastic lining and are not accepted in the organics program unless they are identified as a certified compostable item.

If an item or its packaging doesn't have the term "compostable" or the BPI logo and you're unsure whether or not it's compostable, it's best to put that item in the trash. This will help ensure the organics recycling is clean and free of contamination.



Tips for collecting organics

Use a container with a vented lid



Vented containers allow moisture to evaporate, slowing down the decomposition process of the food in your organics recycling container. This will reduce odors and help your compostable bags hold up longer. If you're purchasing a container, look for one with a vented lid. If you're making your own, simply poke holes in the lid.

Remove liquids



Liquids in your organics recycling container can speed up the decomposition of food and weaken compostable bags. To avoid this, be sure to drain excess liquids before placing food scraps in your collection container. You can also place paper towels or newspaper at the bottom of your collection container to absorb liquids.

Keep your container in the fridge or freezer



Keeping your collection container in the refrigerator or freezer slows down the decomposition process, reduces odors, and prevents pests such as fruit flies. It can also help your compostable bags last longer.

Label containers throughout your house



Label your containers so everyone in your household knows how to sort their waste. Order free labels for your recycling, organics recycling, and trash bins at hennepin.us/organics. Remember to collect organics (and recycling) throughout your home, including in the bathrooms, bedrooms, and office!