



Spring 2011 Newsletter | Volume 19 | No. 1



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numbers demystified.

Save the world
a little each day.



Earth Day is Coming - Register Today

Cheri Zajac

Winter's end brings Spring and the exposure of tons of litter. As snow and ice melt, litter is exposed. Let's all work together to make a difference on Friday, April 29, and Saturday, April 30 during OCRRA's annual Earth Day Litter Clean-Up.

OCRRA is again urging families, friends, community groups, neighbors and businesses to join ranks and clear the debris from our streets, parks and neighborhoods. Last year, more than 8,700 volunteers stepped up and scooped up over 71,000 pounds of unsightly litter.

Since OCRRA's first Earth Day Clean-Up in 1991, this event has evolved into one of the largest events of its kind in the nation. There is no group size or age limit. The more volunteers out there cleaning up, the better our community will look. Let's all take pride and choose a public area that needs some TLC. Parks, school grounds and other low-traffic areas are good choices for groups with young children. Streets, roadsides and other public areas can be targeted by adult groups.



Patrons and staff of the White Branch Library in Syracuse display the mounds of litter they collected on Earth Day 2010. Register your group by April 15 and be a part of the 2011 litter clean-up. Visit www.OCRRA.org for details.

Register your group today! It's this simple – form your clean-up group, choose the day(s) and area you want to clean up, then register with OCRRA.

Check out our new registration form at ocrra.org/programs_earthday.asp, call 453.2866, ext. 202 or mail in the form below.

Groups will receive special stickers to attach to their litter bags to ensure free

disposal, and instructions on where and when to take the filled bags.

Your dedication and tireless volunteer efforts, along with the hard work of our local highway department crews, make this event a great success.

Registration deadline is Friday, April 15, that's right, Tax Day...

Cheri Zajac can be reached at
czajac@OCRRA.org

2011 Earth Day Litter Clean-Up Registration Form



Name of Group: _____

Number of Workers: _____

Name of Contact Person (one name only): _____

Address of Contact (where information/stickers are to be sent):

Street: _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number: (W) _____ (H) _____

E-Mail: _____

You will receive two stickers per worker. If you think people will collect more than two bags of trash, please indicate how many more and we will send you additional stickers.

Number of ADDITIONAL Stickers: _____

Remember, NO chemical waste, paint cans, furniture, appliances, yard waste, or gas tanks are acceptable. **As always, OCRRA encourages groups to recycle any bottles and cans they find.**

In which municipality (city/town/village) are you cleaning? _____

This information will be used to provide your group with instructions on litter drop off. The information will be sent with your bag stickers.

What area are you cleaning? (You choose area; please be as specific as possible to avoid clean-up area overlap): _____

Day(s) Your Group Will Be Cleaning:

☐ Friday, April 29 ☐ Saturday, April 30 ☐ Both

Supplies for clean-up are your group's responsibility. OCRRA provides the special stickers for free disposal through your municipality. **Any questions, please call OCRRA at 453-2866.**



Register Online at
www.OCRRA.org/programs_earthday.asp

OR RETURN REGISTRATION VIA FAX (453-2872)

OR MAIL TO: OCRRA

100 Elwood Davis Road
North Syracuse, NY 13212

OCRRA's Food and Yard Waste Compost Program Garners National Recognition For Efforts

US Composting Council Bestows 2010 "Compost Operation of the Year" Award Upon OCRRA

Greg Gelewski

As many of you know, OCRRA operates two compost facilities, namely the Amboy and Jamesville Compost Sites where residents and small business users can drop off yard wastes and pick up compost and mulch. But, have you noticed OCRRA also offers Master Composter Training Classes in conjunction with the Northern Onondaga County Library System; upon request, provides compost education and training to over 133 schools in the County; and helps home composters to compost their food waste with worms (also known as vermi-composting)? It turns out that the US Composting Council (USCC) noticed, and in January they recognized OCRRA as the 2010 *Compost Operation of the Year* for our outstanding achievements in supporting and promoting organic waste reduction and recycling.

This recognition is another testament to our community's success in waste reduction and recycling. OCRRA's compost program is routinely embraced by over 4,000 residents, who

recycle organic waste by utilizing the compost sites over 24,000 times a year. Also, local businesses and institutions, such as Environmental Products and Services of Vermont, Syracuse University, Wal-Mart and We Care Organics, incorporated food waste recycling by participating in OCRRA's commercial food waste program. Since 2010, these institutions have diverted over 1,200 tons of food from the trash. (OCRRA composts food waste together with yard waste to create a premium compost product, which is available for sale and distribution to residents and business at both compost sites.)

Good news for those looking for top-quality compost, OCRRA is now a member of the US Composting Council's Seal of Testing Assurance (STA) Program. This is a stringent program which guarantees:

OCRRA's compost products are tested regularly to be sure they repeatedly meet the high quality and consistent production standards set by the USCC.

OCRRA's compost products meet all regulations set by the New York State DEC and US EPA for safe, eco-friendly compost.

Testing is completed by certified, third-party laboratories specializing in compost analysis.

Test results are made



USCC President Frank Franciosi, left, presents the 2010 *Compost Operation of the Year* award to OCRRA's Greg Gelewski in January. OCRRA's composting program boasts a food waste and yard waste component as well as vermi-composting education (indoor composting with red wiggler worms).

available through the STA "Compost Technical Data Sheet", so you know what you are buying.

Want to get some of this nutrient-rich, organic compost? Starting Thursday, April 1 OCRRA's Amboy and Jamesville Compost Sites open to accept yard waste and provide mulch and compost to the community. See hours of operation to the left. In addition to our local mulch, there are two types of compost available:

- **OCRRA's Best Organic Compost – Amboy Blend** (food and yard waste combination)

- **OCRRA's Best Organic Compost – Jamesville Blend** (yard waste only)

Both types of compost are screened to ½" diameter, making them ideal for gardening, potting plants and top-dressing lawns.

What's even better than finding locally sourced compost at OCRRA? Finding out how reasonable it is to purchase.

For only \$15, residents may purchase a site pass, which allows them **unlimited drop-off** of yard waste and removal of **up to six cubic yards** of mulch or compost. (Six cubic yards is equal to three standard

pickup truck loads.) A punch card is built into the pass and is used to track the volume of material that is removed by each user. This system helps keep material in stock for residential customers. Passes may be purchased at either compost site or at the main office (100 Elwood Davis Road, North Syracuse).

If residents need more than six cubic yards, no worries! They can always purchase another pass or buy on a per yard basis, according to the fee structure below. Commercial users seeking larger volumes of material have distinct pricing options, which are also listed to the left.

Loading services are available to commercial and residential customers seeking large volumes of material.

So, what are you waiting for? Spring is almost here – get your compost pass today and see just how great OCRRA's compost really is!

Greg Gelewski can be reached at ggelewski@OCRRA.org

Residential Fees for Additional* Compost and Wood Mulch

**Additional = if you are buying more material on a per yard basis only. Exclusive of pass ownership.*

| | Unscreened Compost | Screened Compost | Wood Mulch |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|
| Self Loaded | \$5 / cy | \$10 / cy | \$5 / cy |
| Loaded by OCRRA | \$10 / cy | \$15 / cy | \$10 / cy |

Commercial Fees for Compost and Wood Mulch (loaded by OCRRA only)

| | Unscreened Compost | Screened Compost | Wood Mulch |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|
| Less than 20 yds. | \$10 / cy | \$15 / cy | \$10 / cy |
| More than 20 yds. | \$8 / cy | \$13 / cy | \$8 / cy |
| More than 500 yds. | \$7 / cy | \$10 / cy | \$7 / cy |

Removal of compost and mulch is dependent upon material availability.

cy – cubic yard

NEW
**Expanded
Compost Site
Hours**

SEASON DURATION:

April 1 through
November 30, 2011

JAMESVILLE SITE

Tuesday – Saturday:
9:00 am – 4:00 pm

AMBOY SITE

Monday – Saturday:
9:00 am – 4:00 pm

New Addition to the Blue Bin: SOFT-Cover Books

Allison Stuart

Do you have a lot of old books at home? Wish you could get rid of some of them? In addition to donating them to the Rescue Mission or the Salvation Army, you now have another recycling option for **SOFT-cover** books. OCRRA is pleased to announce – just in time for Earth Day – all soft-cover books are now acceptable in the blue bin! What is a soft-cover book? It is any bound item that is not a hardcover book. Think paperbacks, phone books, manuals, workbooks, notebooks, etc. There is no special preparation necessary if the soft-cover book's binding is stapled or glued. Just toss it into your blue bin. If it has a spiral, wire or plas-

tic binding, those must be removed before you can toss the soft-cover and its contents into your bin.

Hardcover books are still not acceptable in the blue bin due to processing challenges posed by the covers and bindings.

Moral of the story, recycle your soft-covers, and donate your hardcovers. If your unwanted hardcovers are in decent condition (as in, dry and devoid of mold, mildew and musty odors) contact a local library, hospital, nursing home, community center or donation center such as the Rescue Mission (453-7242) or Salvation Army (445-0520, ext. 320), to see if they would like them. (When delivering old books to the

Rescue Mission or to the Salvation Army, separate hardcover books from soft-cover books.)

If donating them does not work out, or if the hardcovers are in poor condition, put them in the trash. They will be processed at the Waste-to-Energy Facility and turned into electricity. The sale of this electricity funds OCRRA's many recycling and solid waste services. So, these books will not end up in a landfill, they will have a beneficial end.

Help spread the word, let your family, friends, neighbors and co-workers know: soft-cover books can now go in the blue bin!

Allison Stuart can be reached at astuart@OCRRA.org



Anisa Williams, left, and Jayden Linney, right, of Syracuse recycle SOFT-cover books in their blue bin. You can too, starting April 1! What about hardcovers? Good condition hardcover books should be donated; they cannot go in the blue bin.

Are you a business with significant quantities of soft-cover books? Call one of the following to arrange for a drop off:

Waste Management / Recycle America at 461-9323

Syracuse Recycling and Recovery at 437-1249

Rescue Mission at 453-7242

Salvation Army at 445-0520, ext. 320



Recycling Rhoda

Let's Talk Trash...and Recycling too!

*Dear Recycling Rhoda,
I'm confused. My plastic grocery bags have a huge recycle symbol on them, but your website says DO NOT put them in the blue bin.....What am I supposed to do with them?*

Baggie Maggie

Dear Baggie Maggie

Honey, good thing you asked. We've got a lot of overzealous recyclers out there. Not that recycling is bad, because it's good; but don't go puttin' stuff in the bin that isn't on the list. All that does is gum up the works at the sorting facility and it can even render a load UNrecyclable if there is too much contamination. So all you out there that throw everything and anything in the bin because you want to save the world a little faster, know that you could actually be reducing what is recycled because you are adding contamination to the system! Chew on that for a bit.

Got a question about what's recyclable? Ask Rhoda. Or better yet, plug it into the searchable database at **OCRRA.org**. It's a big red box on the home page. Ya can't miss it. Now let's get back to those plastic bags...

Keep 'em outta the blue bin. If you put bags in the blue bin they can blow away, which means now they're LITTER and they can harm all the little birdies and duckies and water supply and whatnot. If they make it to the recycling facility they can damage the sorting equipment. So, no loose plastic bags in your blue bin and don't go collecting your recyclables in the house in plastic bags and then dumping everything in the blue bin. If you collect in plastic bags, always empty the recyclables out of the bag and then into your blue bin. Leave those pesky plastic bags entirely out of the equation.

Re-Use 'Em

Re-use them at the grocery store, pack your lunch in them, line your garbage can with them. Heck, take them with you when you walk Fido; but, if you do use them for pet waste or otherwise get them dirty, throw them out afterwards.

Recycle 'Em

All your CLEAN plastic bags can be recycled, just not in your blue bin. Bring your clean bags back to any retail store (that's grocery AND other stores that give out plastic bags). Check with your retailer, you might be able to recycle more than just grocery bags. Some retailers are also accepting plastic newspaper and dry-cleaning bags. Just make sure all the bags are clean and free of trash.

Paper or Plastic?

Why not go with a third option...reusable bags! Almost every dang-nab store you walk into today is sell-

ing their own re-usable bag. Look for something that is durable and can either be thrown in the washing machine or wiped clean.

Got a sense of humor? Got the internet? If so, check out "The Majestic Plastic Bag" narrated by Jeremy Irons. It's a documentary produced by Heal the Bay which follows the path of a plastic bag

as it migrates to the Pacific Ocean; the four minute video aims to help end environmental damage caused by plastic bag litter.

Remember reducing, re-using and recycling are the way to go!

Rhoda

This quarterly publication is brought to you by
OCRRA

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North Syracuse, NY 13212-4312

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Best Blue Bin on the Block or Bust!

Tips for what does and does NOT belong in the blue bin

Ann Fordock

The Best Blue Bin on the Block contest gave many residents the opportunity to take a close look at the recycling rules (*see page 5 for a revised version*). Some of our super recyclers wanted to know the fine points of recycling, those that are not easily fit on a printed recycling flyer, so here you go:

Do I have to put my papers in a brown bag? No – any paper bag will do. Or don't use a bag at all. Use two bins instead; stack the container bin on top of the paper bin to prevent litter.

Aren't ALL plastics recyclable? No. Only wide-mouth, stackable #5 containers and plastic BOTTLES are recyclable. Most bottles are #1 or #2, so if you can't see the number on the bottom, don't worry, if it is a plastic BOTTLE – as in smaller top opening than bottom – throw it in the bin. All other plastics go in the trash.

Do lids and caps found on bottles, jars and jugs go in the blue bin? No, the tops are a different type of plastic from the bottle, jar or

jug. Tops go in the trash.

Some other questions came up too, but before we get into them, let's start out by stating the obvious: Onondaga County residents recycle over 65% of our trash; truly, there are some amazing recyclers in our community!

Some items do not belong in the blue bin, no matter how much we want to recycle them.

Sometimes recyclers, even very good recyclers, can get overzealous with the items they place in the blue bin. This results in contamination, which means certain loads may not actually get recycled because they have too many non-recyclable items in them. So, while a resident might think, more is better, in some cases, it just isn't so.

Has your trash hauler ever left some items in the blue bin after their pick up? Maybe they even placed a special sticker on an item? If so, your hauler was trying to tell you that that item does

NOT belong in the blue bin. Hey, even super recyclers need a refresher now and then.

Some items do not belong in the blue bin, no matter how much we want to recycle them. Below is a list of the most common blue bin boo-boos. To be the best recycler you can be, please:

TRASH THIS

- LATEX paint cans (dry out and remove lids first to prevent spillage)
- Plastics that are NOT a bottle or are NOT a wide-mouth, stackable #5 container
- Ropes, chains, cords, strings, belts, etc.
- EMPTY* containers that previously held pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, motor oil, anti-freeze, etc.
- Glass (not bottles or jars) including broken glass, window glass, drinking glasses, etc.
- Scrap metal
- Paper towels, tissues, plates and cups
- Styrofoam ("peanuts" however, are accepted at most UPS Stores)



Examples of items that do not go in the blue bin: plastic bags, #1 and #2 plastic food containers. The latter can contaminate a load of good recyclables and bags cause machinery slow down at sorting facilities. Plastic bags can be recycled at most grocery or retail stores.

- Dishes, plates, pottery, ceramics
 - Egg cartons
 - (Styrofoam and paper)
 - Metallic paper
 - Waxed Cardboard (frozen food boxes)
 - Coat hangers (plastic and metal)
- *If you are looking to get rid of containers with these materials still inside, register for one of OCRRA's Household Hazardous Waste Days at www.OCRRA.org.

RECYCLE THIS (But not in the blue bin)

Batteries – Onondaga County residents can recycle household batteries (alkalines, rechargeables,

buttons) at any Wegmans or Green Hills Market.

Electronics – Visit www.OCRRA.org for a list of places you can recycle electronics. These items do not belong in the trash.

Florescent Light Bulbs – Check with your local Ace or True Value hardware store, they partner with OCRRA and accept various size bulbs from residents. CFLs are accepted at Home Depot or Lowe's.

Plastic Bags – Return clean bags to a grocery or retail store for recycling.

Ann Fordock can be reached at afordock@OCRRA.org.

Recycling Cheat Sheet

Recycle in your blue bin



Newspapers, Magazines, Catalogs and Soft Cover Books

Keep loose, don't tie.



Cardboard
Flatten.



Papers, Mail, Envelopes



#1 and #2 Plastic BOTTLES*
Empty and rinse, no lids.



Cans and Jars
Empty and rinse out food residue, labels are okay.



#5 Plastic Tubs
Empty and rinse, no lids.

* While there are #1 and #2 food containers, ONLY #1 and #2 BOTTLES are recyclable. Bottles have necks and smaller tops than bottoms. Can't read the numbers on the bottom? Most bottles are #1 or #2 – so if it is a plastic BOTTLE, recycle it!

Recycle, but not in your blue bin



Electronics
(computers, TVs, etc.)
Visit OCRRA.org for more information.



Fluorescent bulbs
(household only)
Recycle at Home Depot, Lowe's, or local ACE and True Value Hardware stores. Visit OCRRA.org for a list of stores.



Plastic bags
Return clean bags to your local grocery or retail store for recycling.

- **Household batteries (no auto batteries)**
Drop off at any Onondaga County Wegmans or Green Hills Market.
- **Hardcover books**
Contact your local library, Salvation Army or Rescue Mission.
- **Mercury thermometers and thermostats**
Bring to OCRRA's Rock Cut Road Transfer Station.
- **Old clothes, shoes and textiles**
Drop off at Salvation Army or Rescue Mission.
- **Propane tanks (20 lb. grilling size only)**
Return to the place of purchase.
- **Scrap metal**
Bring to OCRRA's Rock Cut Road Transfer Station or to any metal recovery facility.
- **Yard waste**
Bring to one of OCRRA's compost sites.

Want to know about an item not listed? Access our searchable database at OCRRA.org

Thank you.

Every time you recycle your newspapers, cereal boxes, junk mail, magazines, drink cartons, cardboard and other things made of paper, you're making my world cleaner and my future brighter. Thank you for putting stuff in your blue bin. It may seem like a small act—but to me, it makes all the difference in the world.

Save the world a little each day.

See how at



Recycling Resources for Schools are Just a Click Away

Sarah Stewart

OCRRA's school webpages have a new look! Recently, OCRRA updated its online school recycling resources with new content for Onondaga County teachers, parents and students. These can be found at www.OCRRA.org; look for the "Schools" section.

What will you find there?

- Recycling curriculum and lesson plan guides. These will help teachers incorporate recycling exercises into their classes.
- Recycling activities for classrooms. For learning...and fun!
- School recycling "how-to" guide and waste reduction tips. Learn how

to have an excellent recycling program and how to minimize waste while at school.

- Learn from the pros. Read about local schools that have unique recycling strategies that you might be able to incorporate at your school.
 - Links to other great recycling resources, like the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the US Environmental Protection Agency's Student Center.
- How else can OCRRA help a school's recycling program?**
- Free classroom presentations. Students (and

staff) can learn how to be excellent recyclers from OCRRA experts.

- **School Recycling Pledge.** Over 120 Onondaga County schools have signed their pledge to be recycling champions. Get your free, framed pledge today. Already have one? Schedule a refresher presentation for your school to reinforce the recycling lesson.
- **Composting in the classroom?** Learn about indoor composting with worms at OCRRA.org.
- **Free recycling containers.** OCRRA offers free indoor recycling containers, as well as decals and



In addition to the many new online resources for schools, OCRRA.org offers free recycling supplies to schools. Here, students at South Side Charter Academy in Syracuse utilize blue bins, ordered through OCRRA.org, during their weekly paper collection.

posters, for schools and businesses. Order online anytime!
So, boost your school's recycling know-how and check

out OCRRA's revised school webpages today!
Sarah Stewart can be reached at ssstewart@OCRRA.org

What do LaBron James, Brad Paisley and Green Hills Market in Syracuse All Have in Common?

In 2010, each of them was recognized for excelling in their field

Dave Nettle

There are NBA MVP's, Country music Entertainers of the Year and then there are *Blue Ribbon Recyclers of the Year*. We all know the other guys have to be stupendous athletes and captivating performers, but what does it take to be a *Blue Ribbon Recycler of the Year*?

First, a business must meet specific criteria set forth by OCRRRA's Blue Ribbon Recycler Program (BRR). BRR applicants are separated into eight industry categories, each having their own set of requirements that pertain to recycling and waste reduction.

For example, the Medical and Healthcare category requires applicants to recycle their batteries and fluorescent bulbs and purchase copy paper containing at least 30% recycled content, amongst other things.

A point system and site visits allowed OCRRRA to score the top BRR's in each category. *Recyclers of the Year* were then selected based on prowess in their industry category.

OCRRRA recognized the 2010 *Recyclers of the Year* on March 2 at the Rosamond

Gifford Zoo. In addition to a photo slide show that ran in the background, attendees heard first-hand how each of the winners were implementing stellar recycling and waste reduction practices. Some of the many examples included: double-siding copies, collecting deposit bottles and donating the earnings to a charity that supports water services in third world countries, purchasing refurbished office furniture, recycling toner cartridges with proceeds funding college visits for underprivileged students, eliminating single-use cups and instituting reusable coffee mugs.

"We have reduced our trash costs"

Heather Hawkins,
Green Hills Market

Recyclers of the Year each received a plaque made of 100% post-consumer recycled glass and wood harvested from fallen pine trees in Colorado.

2010 Blue Ribbon Recyclers of the Year

• *Business Category:*
CDM

- *Education Category:*
SUNY Empire State College
- *Food Service Category:*
Diamond Catering
- *Government Category:*
OCWA
- *Manufacturing Category:*
Jadak LLC
- *Medical Category:*
Liverpool Village Animal Hospital
- *Retail Category:*
Green Hills Market
- *Tourism & Leisure Category:*
Sheraton Syracuse University Hotel

Green Hills Market, the *Retail Recycler of the Year* recipient, feels their environmental efforts have had dual impact. Green Hills Market Vice-President Heather Hawkins notes, "We have reduced our trash costs and we have peace of mind that we are doing the right thing."

Jadak LLC, the *Manufacturing Recycler of the Year* recipient, has a comprehensive recycling program that far exceeds the basics of collecting office paper and bottles and cans for recycling. Scrap metal from the manufacturing process is collected and recycled (they get paid



Justin Tianello, of Jadak, the 2010 Manufacturing *Recycler of the Year* recipient, shows off their air bag machine. Jadak uses it to fill recyclable plastic air pillows, which reduces their use of non-recyclable bubble wrap.

for it!). They wrap electro-sensitive items in recyclable bags and invested in an air bag machine, which they use to fill recyclable plastic air pillows instead of using non-recyclable bubble wrap.

In 2010, Jadak sent 4,000 orders with reused shipping materials which saved them roughly \$1,000. Jadak notes, one of the greatest benefits they have gotten is an increase in business from companies looking to do business with an eco-conscious organization that has proven their own environmental responsibility.

To learn more about what these industry leaders are doing (and to copy cat their ideas), visit www.ocrra.org/recycling_businesses_casestudies.asp

Already doing a fantastic job recycling at work? Apply to be a Blue Ribbon Recycler and you could be in the running for the 2011 *Recycler of the Year* award! Apply for Blue Ribbon Recycler certification today at blueribbonrecycler.com

Dave Nettle can be reached at dnette@OCRRRA.org

Go Green – Become Blue...

Apply for certification and join the local companies that became Blue Ribbon Recyclers this quarter!

- C&S Companies
- Syracuse Sylvan Learning Center

www.blueribbonrecycler.com

has been completely revamped – take advantage of the easy navigation and simple application process.

Sylvan Learning Center employees (and ambassadors from Center State CEO) receive Sylvan's Blue Ribbon Recycler Certificate from OCRRRA Recycling Specialist Dave Nettle. Sylvan reduced their copy paper expenditures by almost 50% thanks to double-siding their printouts. Sylvan utilizes transparencies so students can record answers in test booklets without marking the booklets up. This reduces the number of booklets Sylvan needs to purchase, which saves trees and money!



From the Executive Director...

Just One Word, Plastics

Tom Rhoads

Dustin Hoffman won a Golden Globe Award for Most Promising Newcomer, as Benjamin in the 1967 film, "The Graduate." While the thought of this now classic movie may bring a smile to your face, its famous line "just one word, Plastics," rarely causes a smile when we think about what our society disposes of on a daily basis.

Plastics. They represent a bit more than sixteen percent of household trash and about ten percent of Onondaga County recyclables. Yet, they are one of the most inquired about recyclable.

Many of the questions center around the symbol on the bottom of each plastic item. Back in 1988, the Society of Plastics Industry (SPI) developed resin codes to help the recycling industry improve identification of plastics at sorting facilities. As you might have guessed, the resin codes are the tiny numbers found on the bottom of plastic containers. The use of these resin codes, which appear INSIDE recycle symbols, has led to ongoing consumer confusion. Not all plastics are recyclable just because they have a recycle symbol on the bottom. I know, it is confusing! Let me try and clear up the plastics conundrum...

Here in Onondaga County, we recycle plastic bottles and some plastic containers. Only plastic bottles made of #1 or #2 plastics are recyclable here. **#1 plastics are polyethylene terephthalate, thankfully known as PETE or PET for short.** PET bottles are used for soda and water bottles, and we frequently carry these bottles when we travel or go to work or school. These bottles are valuable as they are highly recyclable. Old bottles are often used in polyester fibers for clothing and carpet.

#2 plastics are high

density polyethylene or HDPE. HDPE bottles come in various shades. The typical milk jug is semi-transparent and "neutral" colored, while most laundry detergent bottles are opaque and have a distinct color. HDPE resin is stronger than PETE and so it can be blow molded into bottles that have a handle. When recycled, HDPE takes on a second life in handled bottles, plastic lumber, tables, chairs, and many other items — even OCRRRA's blue bin is about 35% post-consumer HDPE content.

Not all plastics are recyclable just because they have a recycle symbol on the bottom.

In the U.S. today, the vast market share of plastic bottles are #1 and #2 bottles. For that reason OCRRRA informs the general public that **any BOTTLE, plastic or glass, should go into the blue bin.** We're trying to make it easier — no need to squint at the number on the bottom of the bottle, just toss it in the blue bin if it is a plastic bottle. For clarity's sake, bottles have necks and have smaller top openings than bottoms.

Another common plastic recycling question we get: Why only BOTTLES in the blue bin? Why not plastic #1 or #2 food containers like the ones strawberries come in? The reason isn't the resin, PET or HDPE; rather, it is the process used to make the container. Bottles are made through a blow molding process that uses different heat and pressure than the injection molding process by which containers, outdoor furniture and even blue bins are made from. Unlike the #1 and #2 food containers, the very common #1 and #2 bottles have a strong recycling market. There is a high demand for the #1 and #2 bottles, which is why they are



collected for recycling in 80% of the United States.

The #1 and #2 plastic CONTAINERS (things that are not bottles, also referred to as "non-bottle" PET and HDPE) **are trash in Onondaga County** and throughout most of the United States. While some programs do collect these plastics, they do not always

wraps. Because these films tangle in sorting equipment and contaminate paper recyclables, #4 plastics do not belong in the blue bin. Return these plastics to retail stores. Recent New York State legislation requires most retailers to provide convenient plastic bag recycling receptacles, which you'll find not only in grocery stores, but other retail stores as well.

#6 plastics are polystyrene or PS, commonly known as Styrofoam, which comes in the form of cups, plates or packing materials (think Styrofoam peanuts). Styrofoam peanuts are reusable and often accepted at local UPS stores. Throw all other polystyrene in the trash.

#7 plastics are not actually a specific type of plastic resin. The #7 stands for "other" resins or a mixture of several resins; it is the catch-all category. #7 plastics are an extremely small fraction of household trash, only about 0.4%. Since this small fraction is further split into hundreds of resins, stable markets for household #7 plastics are transient at best, which means they are not in demand for recycling. Vendors do not want to purchase #7 plastics, as it is cost-prohibitive to use them in making new materials. Put your #7 plastics in the trash.

I skipped over #5s, did you notice? That's because I wanted to end on a positive note! **#5 plastics are polypropylene or PP** and the success story here is that there is an emerging market for these plastics. It isn't nearly as solid as the #1 and #2 plastic bottle markets, but it

is growing. As a result, leading programs like OCRRRA's have added #5 plastics to curbside programs. #5 containers are wide-mouth, stackable tubs, typically used for margarine, dairy products and some yogurts.

How do recycling markets develop? More times than not, it is driven by the consumer. Values guide consumer purchasing. If you refuse to buy products packaged in a particular plastic and especially if you let the brand owners know, your purchasing decisions can be very impactful. This was exactly the case with #5 plastics. Consumers wanted brand owners to create recycling opportunities for #5s and that shaped the development of the infrastructure and markets to support the recycling of #5 containers. While price and performance are important to consumers, brand owners heard loud and clear that consumers wanted them to incorporate recycling considerations into their products. **Your voice at the supermarket check-out is heard with every action you make to buy (or not buy) based upon recyclability and recycled content.** Thanks for your support; it is actually easy to recycle right. Even plastics.

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Earth Day Word Search

LITTER
BOTTLES
WRAPPERS
TIRES
VOLUNTEER
SPRING
PLASTIC BAGS

TRASH
HELP
EARTH DAY
CLEAN UP



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Word Search Answer Key

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