



Sort Plastic By Shape For Curbside Recycling

Ignore the number and symbol on plastic containers. Look at the shape instead. In Onondaga County, only put plastic bottles, jars, jugs and stackable (wide-mouth) tubs made for dairy products (or dairy alternatives) in your curbside recycling bin. Firmly attach caps and lids so they don't come off and slip through gaps in the machinery that sorts recyclables.



Recycle

Place items loose in your curbside bin. Never put any recyclables in paper or plastic bags.



BOTTLES



JARS



JUGS



STACKABLE DAIRY TUBS



Drop Off

Large retailers collect empty & dry film plastics for recycling. They never go in your curbside recycling bin.



Trash

Don't wishcycle. Throw out plastic items that are not bottles, jars, jugs or dairy tubs.



What is the Number Inside the Symbol with Three Arrows on a Plastic Item?

In the 1980s, the Society of the Plastics Industry (SPI) developed a resin identification code (RIC), which aptly identifies the resin used in the manufacturing and molding process for plastic containers. The RIC alone does not indicate recyclability. However, at the time, some communities adopted recycling guidelines using the numbers as a way to help consumers sort through plastic materials.

Decades later, many communities across the country, including Onondaga County, have moved away from using RIC numbers, which can lead to higher levels of contamination in our recyclables. Instead, sorting plastics based on the shape of the container is a more accurate guideline for residents, ensuring our recycling partners get the materials they want and need to make new items. Ignore numbers and symbols when sorting plastics at home. Only put plastic bottles, jars, jugs and stackable dairy tubs in your curbside recycling bin.



Photo Credit: iStock.com, 2024

In Onondaga County, plastics are recycled by shape. Ignore the number and symbol found on containers. They do not indicate if the item can be recycled and may increase contamination.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Photo Credit: OCRRA, Camillus, 2024.

OCRRA Recycling Specialist Lisa Piering holds a handful of compost to let a student feel the moisture and quality of the material. SUNY ESF Summer Science Week, hosted by the MOST, made a stop at Amboy Compost Site. The camp explores science and technology careers that impact the environment and the world.



Follow us
on Instagram!

Enjoy photos, videos and great tips to reduce, reuse and recycle on our **NEW** Instagram page. Find us at:
www.instagram.com/ocrra.cny



Ready to test your knowledge
with our new quiz?

Visit www.OCRRA.org/quiz to find out if you understand Onondaga County's rules for recycling plastic containers.



YouTube

STILL NEED
HELP?

Watch our step-by-step guide to sorting plastics by shape for your curbside trash or recycling.

Visit www.YouTube.com/OCRRA and find **Recycle Right: Plastic** under the **Playlists** tab.

Prevent Fires Caused by Rechargeable Batteries

This is why rechargeable lithium-ion batteries NEVER belong in your trash or recycling bins; they can explode or cause fires. Putting rechargeable batteries in your curbside bin is also illegal in New York State. Instead, they can be dropped off at approved collection points.

Rechargeable batteries can easily be damaged when they are tossed into a garbage or recycling truck, compacted, or dumped on the concrete floor of a facility where waste is managed, leading to ignition.

Visit www.OCRRA.org/batteries to learn how to properly dispose of a rechargeable lithium-ion battery. Don't put trash or recycling workers at risk and protect our equipment and facilities from costly damage.



Recycling Rhoda

Blue Bin Transition

Dear Rhoda,

I heard OCRRA won't be handing out blue bins anymore. What am I supposed to do with my recyclables when the one I have breaks?

— Mindful in Marcellus

Never fear, Mindful, recycling will continue! The container you'll use will depend on where you live in Onondaga County. Whether you use a curbside bin, cart, or large recycling receptacle at an apartment complex, the items that can or cannot be recycled will remain the same.

In the 1990s, OCRRA started distributing blue bins to encourage the "hip new thing" – recycling! A lot has changed in 30 years! Norms and technology have transformed. To encourage a switch to newer collection technology, which is fast becoming the industry

norm, OCRRA decided to sunset the blue bin distribution program.

OCRRA announced the blue bin phase-out two years ago and began meeting with individual municipalities, so they would have ample time to consider options. Your municipality's elected leaders have always decided what collection method is best for your city, town or village. For some, that means public works employees pick up trash and recyclables. Other communities may hire a private hauler for their town's curbside collection or ask residents to manage their own waste.

Some municipalities decided to transition to recycling carts because they reduce litter and can be lifted by trucks instead of workers, which prevents injuries. They also hold more recyclables, so you only need to wheel one container to the curb, instead of feeling like a cat-herder, wrangling a bunch of bins.

Some municipalities made the decision to switch to carts before OCRRA announced they were ending the blue bin program.

Some are choosing to stick with blue bins for now. Those towns, villages or haulers can continue supplying blue bins on their own or offer alternatives. To get an answer straight from the source, contact your municipality to find out their plan for replacement containers.

Whatever container you use, recycling helps us remove an average of 38,700+ tons of material from the waste stream each year. That frees up room to manage non-recyclables at the Waste-to-Energy Facility. Plus, we don't need to extract as many resources from the planet when materials are recycled into new products.

Signed,

Recycling Rhoda

Q&A: Meet OCRRA's Summer Interns

This summer, two student interns from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry joined OCRRA's recycling team. Emma Borys and Andrew Gill are both Environmental Biology majors. Borys, who serves as president of the Birding Club, will graduate this year. Gill, an undergrad research assistant, graduates in 2025. He's a member of the Gaming and Blacksmithing Clubs. In this Q&A, Emma and Andrew reflect on their experience with OCRRA.

Q: What is one misconception about waste management you had before working with OCRRA?

EMMA: I was very humbled when I began working for OCRRA. It turned out that a lot of what I was recycling is not supposed to go in the recycling bin, like plastic takeout food containers. I received an OCRRA recycling rules magnet that has helped me. I also learned that all the local recycling rules can be found on OCRRA's website.

ANDREW: I did not realize just how many of the items we use every day need to be specially managed for disposal. I knew that batteries and medications don't belong in the trash, but did not know that items like paint, fluorescent bulbs and gasoline can be managed through special drop-off programs.

Q: What is something you learned that surprised you?

EMMA: Certain items can get stuck in the sorting machines at the recycling facility and cause multi-hour shutdowns. That is why recycling properly is so important.

ANDREW: I learned boxes that go in the freezer and refrigerator are lined with plastic or other coatings to prevent condensation and preserve food quality. This liner makes the boxes non-recyclable, so they belong in the trash. I've been telling my family about it to help them recycle right.

Q: If you could share one piece of advice with your classmates, what would it be?



Andrew Gill



Emma Borys

EMMA: I attended a few meetings hosted by the New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse and Recycling (NYSAR3). I was able to hear from other organizations throughout the state, similar to OCRRA, and discovered that sustainable solid waste management is a growing field, full of passionate people.

ANDREW: If you are not sure how to manage a material, go to OCRRA's website and use the search bar to figure out where the item goes. If you are still unsure if a material is recyclable or trash - when in doubt, throw it out.

Q: What do you think the future of sustainable materials management looks like?

EMMA: The next step is passing an Extended Producer Responsibility Bill, to hold producers of packaging materials responsible for the cost of disposal for those materials and encourage use of recyclable packaging. This means when you throw away your candy bar wrapper, the candy company will be responsible for the cost of the wrapper's disposal rather than you, the taxpayer. Sustainable living needs to be accessible to everyone and this bill allows that to happen.

ANDREW: Compost!

How Do I Get Rid of Pots and Pans?

Pots and pans do not fit OCRRA's metal recycling rules and should not be put in the recycling bin. If your pots and pans are not in good enough condition to donate, they can be added to curbside trash. Alternatively, pots and pans are considered scrap metal and can be brought to OCRRA's Rock Cut Road Transfer Station or to a local metal recycler. Contact recyclers on the list below prior to delivery to find out if they will accept your item.

- Ben Weitsman & Son of Syracuse, LLC., Solvay/Geddes, (315) 488-3171
- Bodow Recycling, Syracuse, (315) 422-2552
- CNY Resource Recovery, Syracuse, (315) 471-0254
- Metalico Syracuse, Inc., Syracuse, (315) 463-9292



FACT: In 2023, OCRRA's Waste-to-Energy Facility recovered 13,412 tons of ferrous and non-ferrous metal for recycling.

How Do I Get Rid of Propane Tanks?

Emma Borys, OCRRA Intern

As summer camping and barbecue season comes to a close, the size of a propane tank determines your options for disposal. Large (20 lb.) propane tanks, often used for grills, never belong in the trash or recycling bin. They can be refilled and reused repeatedly. If your tank can no longer be used, contact a business listed on the right for disposal options.

Each location has different tank preparation requirements and restrictions regarding the types of tanks they accept. Disposal charges may apply. Please call the business in advance for details.

One-pound propane cylinders, commonly used for camping trips, should never go in the recycling bin. They should be completely emptied and put in the trash. Just like other cans with contents under pressure, use up all the contents before tossing them into the trash. Otherwise, they may ignite. If you need help emptying a tank, contact one of the listed businesses for guidance. Also, call in advance to find out if they accept EMPTY one-pound cylinders for recycling.

Propane Tanks are not accepted at the Rock Cut Road Transfer Station, but grills can be dropped off for a fee. Visit www.OCRRA.org/propane-tanks for details.



- Ben Weitsman & Son, Solvay, (315) 488-3171
- Bodow Recycling, Syracuse, (315) 422-2552
- B'ville Supply, Baldwinsville, (315) 635-5221 (20 lb. cans only)
- Country Propane, Clay (closes seasonally) and Central Square, (315) 676-2978
- Energy Gases, East Syracuse, (315) 446-8400

How Do I Get Rid of Metal?



**CURBSIDE
RECYCLING**



- **Food & beverage cans.** Empty, rinse & place lid inside can.
- **Aluminum foil & disposable aluminum pans & plates.** Must be clean & wadded up.
- **Aerosol cans.** Must be empty. No cans that held toxics (those go in the trash).



**DROP OFF
TO RECYCLE**



- **Propane tanks.** Visit OCRRA.org/propane-tanks for details.
- **Batteries.** Visit OCRRA.org/batteries for details.



TRASH



- **Any metals not listed above.**
- **Needles.** Visit OCRRA.org/sharps for special prep needed.
- **Small appliances.** Toasters, vacuums, etc.
- **Combination metal/cardboard canisters.** Peanuts, cocoa, oatmeal, coffee, etc.
- **Empty metal paint cans.**

Search the database at OCRRA.org for help with more items.

FACT: Type “appliances” into the OCRRA.org searchable database to see how to manage large household appliances.



From OCRRA's Board of Directors...

Consumers Hold Power to Shape and Influence a Circular Economy

Blair Page, OCRRA Board Member

We hear more and more about a circular economy, sustainability, and nature-based solutions, but what do all those things have to do with you and me? What is our role? Does any of it really matter?

In nature, we rarely find what would be defined as “waste.” The byproducts of some organisms, like fallen leaves, exhaled carbon dioxide, and bodily waste become the essential inputs for other organisms. Biodiversity in the forms of plants, fungi, bacteria, animals, and protists all help to ensure that energy and nutrients keep moving through the ecosystem and that everything gets recycled, becomes reincorporated into the food web or, in the case of energy, is given off as heat. The sustainability of a natural ecosystem means that although communities do change and develop with time, the conditions for the following generations should be at least as good, if not better, than the current generation enjoys.

A circular economy is essentially the idea of people trying to make our use of resources more closely mimic that of nature. This is largely accomplished through the efficient use of resources, making products that are fully recyclable or compostable, and minimizing (or ideally eliminating) the generation of “waste.” Achieving these goals depends on the providers of goods and services as well as the consumers.

For manufacturing, the design of each product should include its end-of-life plan so every component can be reclaimed for reuse, recycling, or beneficial composting. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) works toward making this a reality by requiring product makers to have their entire life-cycle in mind. By recollecting their products when the consumer is done with them, manufacturers can help reduce waste, conserve resources, and are incentivized to make the materials in their products easier to reclaim and recycle.

For consumers, it is essential that our buying choices also reflect the circularity seen in natural ecosystems. One way to do this is to look for items that contain a maximum amount of “post-consumer content.” This means the items we put in our recycling bins, or are otherwise reclaimed, are used in the making of new products. Recycling is a business based on supply and demand. It is great to have a strong supply of materials from conscientious people recycling right, but the system doesn't work if there's no demand for

the products that are made with the “post-consumer” materials.

With respect to recycling, it's essential to “recycle right.” The value of a material is based on its quality – the lack of contamination in the case of recycling. Even if you are sure that you know what is and isn't recyclable, visit www.OCRRA.org/recycle to take a quick look at OCRRA's guidelines for our community. You might find that something has changed since you last looked. Also, if you travel to another community, take a minute to review what is acceptable for recycling there. Just as the market for consumer preferences changes from place to place, so does the market for recycling.

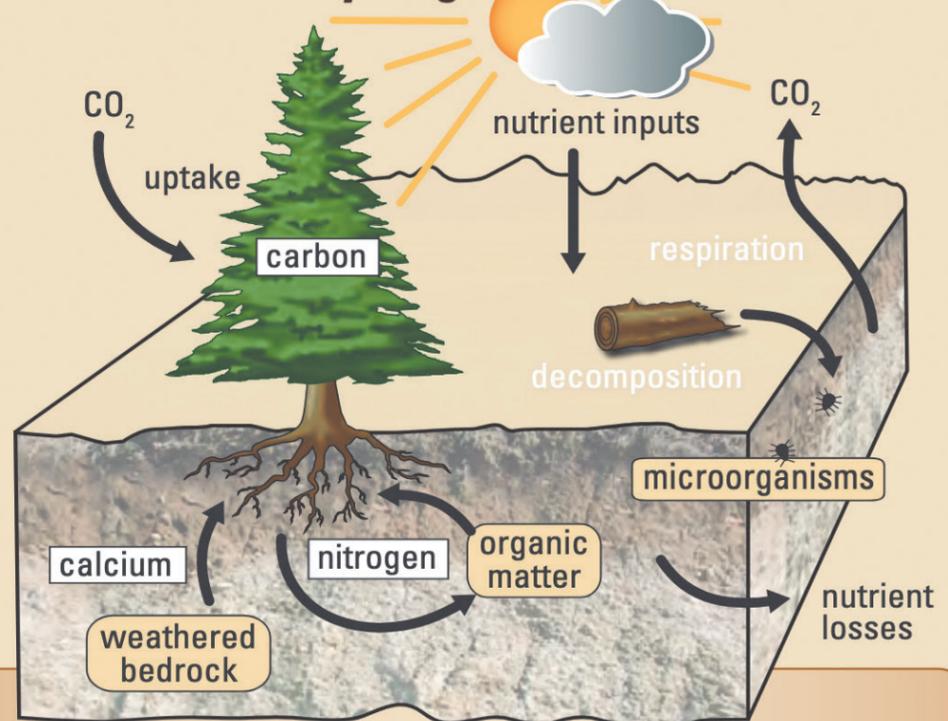
Some of the best ways to ensure high quality recycling is through programs like the Bottle Bill. When we return bottles and cans for a refund, we contribute to clean, high-quality, and valuable streams of glass, aluminum, and plastic. When corrugated card-

board, office paper, metals, or other products are collected as separate, clean streams, their quality and value increase and we help to contribute to the circular economy of those products.

Before you make a purchase, ask yourself: How long will I use this item? Is it something that can be recycled or composted? Is it something I can repair or use repeatedly? Is there a better choice for the environment and for how I spend my dollars? If these questions lead you to feel that more harm than good might come from your purchase, consider other options or doing without something that is not truly necessary. Buying and selling second-hand, donating usable materials to local charities, and sharing items among friends and family can save money, reduce waste, and build community.

Why should you and I be concerned about how we use resources? There are many reasons, but one is that landfills in our state and

Carbon and Nutrient Cycling



Carbon, nitrogen, calcium, and other key nutrients are transferred from plant to soil to air and back to plant again through processes such as uptake, respiration, and decomposition. This nutrient cycling is a ‘biogeochemical’ process because nutrients follow pathways that are mediated by biological, geological, and chemical players. These players include plants, soil microorganisms, weathered rock, and gases in the air and soil. This diagram represents only some of the possible pathways involved in nutrient cycling.

in our country are quickly filling with the resources that we are not recovering. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) identified 25 active landfills for municipal solid waste (MSW or our general trash) in 2020. In that same report from four years ago, the DEC indicated that New York MSW landfills had a cumulative permitted capacity of approximately 200 million tons, with a permitted fill rate of approximately 11 million tons of trash per year. Those figures suggest there was a bit less than 20 years of landfill space available in New York as of 2020. Increases in population and/or waste production could further challenge that time frame.

In Onondaga County, through our Waste-to-Energy (WTE) Facility, we're able to reduce the weight of material going to landfill by nearly 80% as combustible material is burned to generate electricity and metal is removed from the ash for recycling. Although the facility is permitted to process approximately 360,000 tons of non-recyclable waste per year, our county produces more waste than can be processed at the facility and some types of waste are not suitable for WTE, including, concrete, brick, PVC pipe and drywall. The additional waste, along with the ash from the WTE facility, does go to regional landfills. Consequently, although we may be in better standing than some communities, we're still



Photo Credit: OCRRA, Syracuse, 2024

A load of trash is dumped at the Waste-to-Energy Facility in Jamesville as a claw lifts materials to begin combustion. The process creates enough electricity each year to power roughly 30,000 households.

not isolated from the challenges of shrinking landfill capacity.

People often underestimate the power they have as consumers, but the markets will generally work to provide goods and services that are in demand. If our demands, through the spending of our dollars, are focused on sustainably provided goods and services, the markets will rise to meet those demands.

The shape of our future is built on the choices we make today.

Blair Page has served on the OCRRA Board of Directors since 2017. A past board chairman, Page currently chairs the Administrative Committee and is a faculty member in Le Moyne College's Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences. Page can be reached at pagebd@lemoyne.edu.



Confidential Document Shredding Special

25¢ per pound

**Year-round, Monday – Friday
8 am to 4 pm**

Items will not be shredded instantly, but will be destroyed in 24 hours or less following drop off.

- No appointment necessary. Unlimited drop off.
- No business docs. Onondaga County household materials only.
- Prohibited items: Cardboard, 3-ring binders, hanging file folders, plastic folder holder envelopes, large metal binder clips (staples, paper clips and rubber bands are okay).

1925 Park St. #2, Syracuse (Bodow Recycling Building)

COUPON EXPIRES: December 31, 2024

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Printed on Recycled Paper

Mercury Collection Event Set for Saturday, September 14

OCRRA is teaming up with our partners at Reworld (formerly Covanta) to make sure families in Onondaga County have an easy way to properly dispose of old mercury thermometers and thermostats. They never belong in curbside trash or recycling bins. Mercury can be harmful to humans and the environment if it is not managed properly.

This year's Mercury Thermostat and Thermometer Collection is coming up on Saturday, September 14, from 8-11 a.m. at Miller Environmental Group on 532 State Fair Boulevard in Syracuse (just past the I-690 West on-ramp off Hiawatha Boulevard).

Reworld, which operates the local Waste-to-Energy Facility, is donating a \$10 Lowe's gift card to every resident who brings in a thermometer or thermostat that contains

mercury. One gift card will be offered, per resident drop-off, regardless of the number of mercury items turned in. If a thermometer is dropped off, Covanta will provide a mercury-free digital thermometer replacement.

Mercury thermometers have SILVER, METALLIC GREY, or BLACK filling in their bulbs. Any other color filling indicates it is a non-mercury thermometer and it should be thrown in the trash. Mercury thermostats have dials or levers that you need to manually adjust. If you take off the faceplate and see one or more glass vials containing a silver substance, you have a mercury thermostat. Registration is required. Visit www.OCRRA.org/events for details. This free event is for household items from Onondaga County only. Business items are not accepted.



Photo Credit: OCRRA, Syracuse, 2024

Mercury thermostats have one or more glass vials with a silver substance under the faceplate.

Reduce Waste With a Costume Swap

Clothing and other textiles NEVER belong in your recycling bin. However, a fun costume can still be reused! Before Halloween, the Betts Branch and White Branch Libraries in Syracuse will give away gently-used costumes until supplies are gone. Once the schedule is finalized, details will be shared on www.OCRRA.org/events.

After Halloween, the same library branches will collect clean and gently-used costumes during the entire month of November. Those donations will be given away next year.

If you can't make it to the library's drop-off locations, look for a costume swap online or organize one in your neighborhood.



Drop Off Pumpkins for Composting

Your perfectly carved pumpkin doesn't have to be thrown away. Reduce waste by composting it instead. If you can't compost at home, Onondaga County residents can drop off pumpkins at OCRRA's Amboy or Jamesville Compost Sites from November 1 – November 23, 2024, during normal hours of operation. Remove all decorations in advance, including candles, stickers or other embellishments. No painted pumpkins please.



This free opportunity is only for Onondaga County residents, not municipal or commercial operations. A compost site pass is not required for pumpkins dropped off by November 23. Pumpkins never belong in a recycling bin. However, composting is a great way to recycle organic material and give your garden soil a boost.

Mark Your Calendar

FREE PAINT RECYCLING

SAT., SEPT. 28

8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Registration Required

www.OCRRA.org/events

MERCURY COLLECTION EVENT

SAT., SEPT. 14

8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Registration Required

www.OCRRA.org/events

WEP FEST 2024

SAT., SEPT. 21

10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Metro Syracuse Treatment Plant

JAMESVILLE COMPOST SITE

SUN., NOV. 24

Closes for the Season

Reopens Spring 2025

FACT: Visit OCRRA during Sportsmen's Days on Sept. 28-29 at Carpenter's Brook Fish Hatchery, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.