

## **Recycling Plastic in Western Massachusetts**



### **Which Plastics are Recyclable? Why?**

Recycling plastics can be confusing. The chasing arrows (or triangle) with a number in the center is a code that identifies the plastic resin type. This code is used by plastics manufacturers but it DOES NOT necessarily mean the plastic is recyclable.

Seven basic resin types are used to make thousands of different kinds of plastics. Dyes and other additives are added to the basic resin to give the final product a desired color, shape, and texture. These additives, along with the way that plastics are formed, impact the ability to recycle the plastic. Recycled plastics must be carefully sorted by type before they can be melted down and reformed into new products. Placing your plastics in the recycling bin is just the beginning of the long process of sorting and reprocessing in order to recycle plastics.

Recycling companies collect the plastic types that have sufficient market value to cover the costs of collection, processing, and transportation to markets. In western Massachusetts, most plastic bottles and containers meet these criteria.

Some plastics that can't be recycled, such as polystyrene (Styrofoam) and plastic bags, have limited markets and present haulers and processors with logistical challenges. Wind easily blows these lightweight plastics, creating litter problems; they require large amounts of storage space; and they get tangled up in processing equipment.

Plastics larger than two gallons in size can't be recycled because they do not fit through the processing equipment at the recycling facility. Small plastic pill bottles, on the other hand, are too small to be recycled and fall through the processing equipment, potentially damaging the equipment and creating a safety hazard.

### **Which Plastics *Can I* Recycle?**

Think Bottles and Containers!

- ▶ All plastic food and beverage bottles
- ▶ Most plastic food containers
- ▶ Most other plastic bottles under two gallons in size



*Just a few exceptions:*

- Styrofoam cups and trays and microwave trays are not recyclable.
- If the bottle contained motor oil, antifreeze, pesticides, herbicides, adhesives, paints, or solvents, it cannot be recycled. The residue from motor oil and chemicals seeps into the plastic and contaminates it.

### **Ideas for Reducing or Reusing Plastics**

- Styrofoam can be tough to avoid, but not impossible. Bring your own mug with you to get hot and cold drinks. Try to avoid deli items packaged on Styrofoam trays.
- Look for products in the least amount of packaging.
- Try to reduce the need to throw away plastics. For example, use canvas shopping bags. Don't accept a bag if you don't need one. Some stores sell cooking oils, liquid soaps, and detergents in bulk; refill your own container.
- Reuse plastic bags for vegetables and fruits.
- Reuse plastic containers or make them into something else.
- If you must buy a plastic product, choose one made of recycled plastic—this will help strengthen markets for recycling plastics.
- Many local mailing service stores, and some small businesses, accept foam packing peanuts for reuse. Check the yellow pages under “mailing services” or “shipping services” for the one closest to you. Be sure to call first to confirm that the store will accept them.
- Some local stores will accept plastic bags for recycling. If your grocery store doesn't accept plastic bags, ask them to start. Many area secondhand and used books stores will accept bags for reuse. Ask your dry cleaner if they will reuse their bags.
- When you purchase new plants, ask your garden center about returning the plastic pots.

### **Styrofoam and TechnoTrash Recycling**

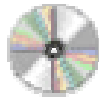
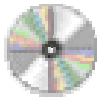
- Foam blocks, like the packaging typically used to secure electronics or appliances in shipping, are called “expanded polystyrene molders” or EPS. Clean, uncontaminated EPS packaging can be mailed to:

Alliance of Foam Packaging Recyclers  
1298 Cronson Blvd., Suite 201  
Crofton, MD 21114

The EPS should be free from any significant dirt, tape, or other contaminants and should be marked with the plastics symbol #6 (in the triangle or chasing

arrows). Foodservice items are not accepted—only foam block packaging. The consumer is responsible for the shipping fees. *There are no local outlets for reusing polystyrene blocks.*

▶ GreenDisk accepts a wide range of “technotrash,” including diskettes, print cartridges, cell phones, and all forms of electronic media and cases. GreenDisk destroys private data and recycles everything. Call 1-800-305-3475 or visit [www.greendisk.com](http://www.greendisk.com). The two options GreenDisk offers for individuals are the “Technotrash Pack-IT Service” and the “GreenDisk Technotrash Can.” Both options have an associated fee.



**For More Information:** Call the Franklin County Solid Waste District at 413-772-2438 or visit [www.FranklinCountyWasteDistrict.org](http://www.FranklinCountyWasteDistrict.org). Hearing-impaired individuals can use the MA Relay at 711 or TTY/TDD access at 1-800-439-2370.

## Do Recycle these kinds of empty plastic bottles and containers

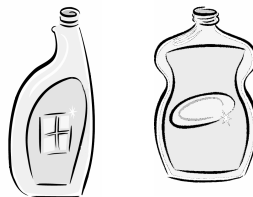
### Kitchen

Milk, water, and soda bottles  
Juice bottles  
Cooking oil bottles  
Syrup, ketchup, other condiments  
Peanut butter jars  
Margarine and butter tubs  
Yogurt containers



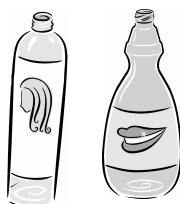
### Household Cleaners

Liquid dish soap  
Liquid household cleaner bottles



### Bathroom

Liquid hand soap  
Shampoo and conditioner  
Mouthwash  
Lotions



Pump hair sprays (non-aerosol)  
Vitamin bottles

### **Laundry**

Liquid laundry detergent  
Bleach (rinse well)  
Liquid fabric softener



### **At home and on the go**

Soft drinks  
Iced tea  
Sports drinks  
Water



### **Preparation Instructions**

Put lids/caps and pumps in the trash.  
Empty all liquids.  
Rinse plastics clean.

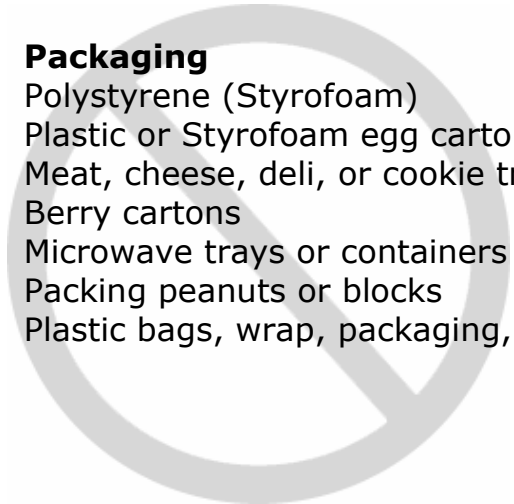


**Do not put recyclables in plastic bags!**

**Don't Recycle  
these kinds of  
plastics**

### **Packaging**

Polystyrene (Styrofoam)  
Plastic or Styrofoam egg cartons  
Meat, cheese, deli, or cookie trays  
Berry cartons  
Microwave trays or containers  
Packing peanuts or blocks  
Plastic bags, wrap, packaging, or film ("cling wrap")



## **Yard and Garden**

Plastic swimming pools, lawn furniture  
Flower or plant pots  
Black plastic

## **Household**

Toys  
Plastic coat hangers  
Decorative light holders  
Plastics from electronics or appliances  
Pails, buckets, clothes hampers, or recycling bins  
CDs, video tapes, cassettes, or cases  
Medical supplies

## **Other**

Caps, lids, or pumps  
Jugs/pails over 2 gallons in size  
Small prescription pill bottles  
Bottles that contained motor oil, other automotive products, poison,  
pesticides, solvent, adhesive, paint, or other chemicals