

Frequently Asked Questions about Recycling

Can I recycle plastic flower pots once I plant the flowers? *Unfortunately, even though these pots have an arrow symbol on them, they are NOT recyclable in our single stream system. You might be able to take them back to a plant nursery and they will likely reuse them! In the Roaring Fork Valley, Eagle Crest Nursery, Mountain Greenery, and Lowe's will all accept used plastic pots.*

Is Styrofoam recyclable? *Styrofoam is NOT recyclable in Pitkin County. The best thing to do with Styrofoam is avoid it or reuse it for shipping, and put it in the trash if you can't.*

What about plant based plastic? *Plant based plastics (#7) are typically made from corn or sugar cane, not petroleum, so they CANNOT be recycled. But you can compost them!*

Are all clear plastic cups recyclable? *Make sure to look at the bottom of the cup to see if it is made from plant materials. If it is labeled as a #7 plastic, or there is any indication on the cup that it is made from plants or is compostable/biodegradable, it is NOT recyclable.*

Can I recycle all paperboard? *Almost! If the paperboard holds frozen foods or liquids (i.e. coffee or soup) it CANNOT be recycled. If it holds dry or refrigerated foods, it's good to go!*

Do I compost or recycle newspapers? *Either! Because of its low quality, newspaper is better to compost than recycle, but both will accept newspaper.*

What should I do with empty propane canisters? *Propane canisters are NOT recyclable. They are highly dangerous because they are pressurized and must be emptied carefully at the Pitkin County Solid Waste Center (PCSWC) Household Hazardous Waste facility. DO NOT pierce the canister yourself; take it to the HHW at the PCSWC.*

What do I do with aerosol cans? *Aerosol cans need to be taken directly to the Pitkin County Solid Waste Center (PCSWC) for them to dispose of properly. DO NOT put these in the trash or recycle, take them directly to the PCSWC.*

Can I recycle any of my sports equipment? *Sports equipment such as skis/snowboards, boots, football pads, soccer and basketballs are NOT recyclable. Take these items to local consignment or thrift stores to repurpose them, or they can be taken to the Pitkin County Solid Waste Center Drop and Swap program.*

Can I recycle wood? *All wood must be taken to the Pitkin County Solid Waste Center for them to recycle specifically. Wood CANNOT be recycled in single-stream recycling.*

Do I have to break down my cardboard boxes? *Yes! When boxes are not broken down, they have to be flattened at the recycling facility, which increases labor costs and makes recycling more expensive.*

Can I leave the tape/labels on my cardboard? *Yes!*

Are plastic bags recyclable? *No, plastics bags should NEVER be put in single-stream recycling, they jam the machinery and it takes time and labor to remove them, which increases the cost of recycling. Some of the grocers and retailers down valley from Aspen have dedicated receptacle for recycling plastic bags (City Market, Target, etc.).*

What do I do with packing materials? *Styrofoam packing peanuts, plastic air pillows, bubble wrap and any other plastic packing materials should be taken to local shipping stores (UPS or Millennium Pack and Ship in Aspen) to be reused or thrown in the trash. They are NOT recyclable. Some packing peanuts, however, are compostable! You can identify these by putting them in water and if they begin to disintegrate, they are compostable!*

Can you recycle paper coffee cups? *Paper coffee cups are NOT recyclable. Disposable coffee cups are lined with a thin layer of plastic. Some disposable coffee cups are compostable, though, so look to see if it's labeled as certified compostable before throwing it in the trash!*

Can I still recycle shredded paper? *No, shredded paper is NOT recyclable in the single stream system. The machinery used to recycle paper does not register such small pieces and they contaminate other recyclables. Shredded paper is great to compost, but if you do not have access to compost or a shredded paper recycling service (PaperWise), then please place it in the trash.*

What do I do with burnt out light bulbs? *Light bulbs are NOT recyclable in single-stream recycling. They must be taken to designated locations to be disposed of or thrown away. City Hall 2nd floor, Alpine Bank, and the Pitkin County Solid Waste Center all accept used CFL light bulbs to recycle properly, other bulbs must be thrown away.*

But aren't pizza boxes just cardboard? Why can't they be recycled? *If a pizza box has any grease on it, it CANNOT be recycled. However, it can be composted.*

Are milk cartons recyclable? *Yes! Any cartons that are labeled as a "Tetra Pak" are recyclable!*

Should I recycle my paper napkins? *No. Soft paper such as napkins and tissues are NOT recyclable. They are great in the compost, though!*