

There are so many materials that can be recycled today, helping to save natural resources, energy and money. With single stream recycling we don't have to separate paper and cardboard from glass, plastics and tin/aluminum/steel, so it's also much easier to recycle. Everything can go together in one recycling container. Well, almost everything. There are still some materials that just don't belong in your curbside recycling bin.

Plastic bags, plastic bags, plastic bags:

If you ask anyone at a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) where recyclables are processed what the top three contaminants are, the answer will be plastic bags, plastic bags, plastic bags. **Plastic bags should not be put in curbside recycling bins.** While recyclable, they cannot be handled easily by a MRF. If the bags are not handpicked out of the rest of the materials at the start of the process, the thin film plastic gets stuck in the MRFs machines. Since a large number of bags cannot be captured by workers, numerous shut downs and unsafe conditions happen. Plastic bags and other thin film materials (i.e. newspaper bags, bread bags) cause significant processing problems at most facilities, and **should not be put in curbside recycling!**

Plastic bags should be recycled at a local retailer. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) estimates that consumers use 400 plastic bags a year and each year Americans throw away more than 100 billion plastic bags! Less than 1% is recycled. The [New York State Plastic Bag Reduction, Reuse and Recycling Act](#) mandates certain retailers provide recycling and a recent [amendment](#) to the law extends plastic bag recycling beyond grocery bags, to include such materials as bread bags and produce bags.



While we recommend using reusable bags, or saying "No thank you" to a bag when it's not needed, we recognize consumers still use plastic bags on a regular basis. Many residents, especially in apartments, use a plastic bag to collect recyclables in the home due to limited space for a bin and ease of transporting to the outdoor recycling container. If this is the case, dump the recyclables out of the plastic bag into the outdoor container. The bag can be reused, taken for recycling at your local retailer, or put in the garbage container. Even if put in the garbage it will be incinerated and create electricity here in Dutchess County, rather than contaminate the rest of the recycling.

There are other materials that should **not go in your curbside recycling bin**, but should either be reused, donated, recycled at special locations, or thrown away, such as:

Scrap metal:



Metal coat hangers, pots and pans, metal cutlery, wires, cables, nuts and bolts, pipes, and empty propane tanks should either be thrown away or taken to a scrap metal dealer. Scrap metal dealers will recycle the material and possibly pay you for the items. While empty soup cans, empty non-hazardous aerosol cans, aluminum cans and foil can be recycled, other metal items should not go in the curbside recycling bin. The scrap metal can ruin the machines and cause shut downs. MRFs have also had to have emergency shutdowns due to hazardous items being mixed with the recyclables, such as propane tanks.

Strings, ropes, hoses:



Again, they get stuck in the MRF machines, causing breakdowns and unsafe conditions. Garden hoses, holiday lights, ropes, and extension cords should not be put in your recycling bin. Some retailers will recycle broken holiday lights, but otherwise these items, if no longer useful, should be thrown in the trash.

Textiles:

It's hard to believe, but textiles such as clothing and sheets are thrown in curbside recycling bins. All textiles should be donated, either in a local donation bin or at a local charity. All textiles, as long as they are not wet or moldy, can be donated.



Food waste:



Food waste can be composted and used as a soil amendment if you have a backyard compost system, but it should not be put in your curbside recycling bin. Food containers and boxes should be emptied before putting them in the recycling bin. For example, pizza boxes are okay to recycle, but all pizza remnants, crust and cheese should be taken out before recycling.

Also not for your curbside bin:

- Light bulbs and fluorescent lights
- Electronics and batteries
- Appliances
- Hardcover books
- Lumber
- Tires
- Empty motor oil containers
- Hazardous materials (even if the container is empty)
- Empty feed bags
- Yard waste

Visit the [Recycle](#) section of our website to learn more about recycling some of these materials.