

We Compost!

Make Compost, Not Trash

Frequently Asked Questions

Will Collecting materials for composting attract pests?

With proper, leak-proof interior collection containers, regular emptying of these containers into the larger collections bins, and frequent collection by the hauler, there should be no increase in pest problems. In fact, these problems may be reduced through better-organized, cleaner work and service areas.

If pest problems do occur, more frequent bin washing, using hot water and a small amount of bleach, oxygen-based bleach alternatives, or baking soda should resolve the problem. Make sure that all wash water is disposed of properly. Also, keep bins and garbage storage areas in good shape without gaps and holes in structures and bins that can allow pests to enter.

How about odor problems?

To minimize odors, regularly empty collection containers and periodically rinse them with soap and hot water. Remember, these same materials were present in your garbage before, they are just being separated for collection and processing. Washing bins as mentioned above will resolve both odor and pest challenges.

Another remedy for odors is a product called "Dumpster Fair" available from Zep. This is an industrial odor control product in granular form that can be applied directly to food waste containers. For more information, check the website at www.zep.com.

How much "contamination" (non-compostable material) is acceptable in the compost bin?

No contamination is acceptable in the *We Compost!* program due to its negative impact on the safety, appearance, and marketability of the finished compost product.

The best rule of thumb is this: if you're not sure an item is compostable, dispose of it as garbage until you can determine that it is, in fact, acceptable. Make every effort to keep plastics, foil, metals, and glass out of the bins.

Can I use regular plastic liners in my interior containers?

No, plastic is considered a contaminant in the organics program because it makes the final compost product impure. Biodegradable bags are acceptable, but are more expensive than regular liners. To minimize expense, businesses often use them only in the designated organics bins. Those that do



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choose regular liners attach them to the bins using bungees or rubberbands, and have employees dump the contents into the large organics collection containers and throw the liner themselves into the garbage. Some businesses choose to do without liners in the bins, and instead wash them out regularly. This will result in more cost savings.

What are the keys to success for my business participating in We Compost!?

First, the more food waste you can keep out of your garbage, the less garbage you have to be hauled away. Make correct separation of food waste from trash a core job requirement for your employees. Management must be serious about effective participation for a business to get the most from the program.

Second, make sure that the system set up inside your business for separating and transporting food waste to the larger collection bins is easy for your employees, and that the overall workload is as evenly distributed as possible. Our technical assistance and training can help you with this element.

Third, reward employees for effective participation in the food waste program if possible. A little recognition can go a long way toward establishing a "recycling-positive" culture within your business.

Fourth, monitor the relative volumes of garbage and food waste being collected by Waste Connections after you initiate the program, and adjust service levels to match the actual volumes of materials.

What happens to the materials being collected by the program?

Food scraps, soiled paper, and other biodegradable materials collected from your business are taken to Cedar Grove Composting, a privately owned facility in Maple Valley, WA. They are combined with yard trimmings and are composted into a soil amendment which is sold to landscapers and garden supply wholesalers (and you can purchase it at your local garden store!)