

PLASTICS RECYCLING 101

- Q. I keep hearing about plastics recycling, but I'm confused. What plastics can I recycle? And how do I go about it?
- A. First of all, you need to know what your local jurisdiction's policy is about recycling curbside. At present Albemarle County residents must take their sorted recycling, with the exception of newspapers, to the McIntire Road Recycling Center. Charlottesville residents may put their recyclable plastics (#1 and #2) in their curbside recycling. We have no local recycling available for nos. 3-7.
- Q. I live in the county. That sounds like a lot of trouble. Why shouldn't I just put plastic containers in my trash? I'm already paying to have it hauled away, and my container is never full on pickup day anyway.
- A. The biggest reason not to put them in your trash is that millions of tons of trash are created every year and we are running out of places to put it. Plastics don't break down in landfills and will still be there long after we, our children and our children's children's children are gone. Recycling also keeps many loaded trash trucks off our highways, reducing pollution and saving scarce and expensive gasoline. Besides, plastics you recycle can be put to use making new products.
- Q. Tell me more - where do I find these numbers you are talking about?
- A. Usually the numbers can be found on the bottoms of such things as plastic water bottles, detergent bottles, soft drink and juice containers as well as the clear containers salad greens and cherry tomatoes are packaged in. Always turn any kind of plastic container over to see if it has a 1 or 2 enclosed in a triangle. I'll show you examples later. Some recyclable plastic bottles are not clear. Very often they are also type 1 or 2 recyclables.
- Q. Okay, you've convinced me. You said they can be made into new stuff. How about some examples?
- A. Recycled #1 plastic may be in the carpet in your family room, in the fleece jacket you got for Christmas, in the cozy comforter on your bed, or made into a tote bag for your groceries. It can also become new bottles, plastic film or strapping material. #2 plastic can find new life in bottles for non-food items, as plastic lumber for decking, fencing and picnic tables. Or you may find it in pipes, floor tiles, flower pots, buckets, crates or... **RECYCLING BINS!**

RECYCLABLE PLASTICS CODES

(AND WHAT THEY ALL STAND FOR)



Polyethylene Terephthalate, commonly called Polyester

Found in bottles for soft drinks, water, juice, mouthwash, catsup, salad dressing; jars for peanut butter, jelly, jam, pickles.



High Density Polyethylene

Found in bottles for milk, water, juice, cosmetics, shampoo, dish and laundry detergents, and household cleaners; grocery and retail bags*, cereal box liners; reusable shipping containers, moldings, pipe and conduit, plastic wood composites, wire and cable covering.



Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC, Vinyl)**



Low Density Polyethylene**



Polypropylene**



Polystyrene**



Other**

* Recycle plastic grocery bags in bins provided at grocery stores

** Not locally recyclable at present.