



Recycle+ Frequently Asked Questions

Why is there a monthly fee, even if I don't request a pickup?

This is an optional service, and only a fraction of community members will sign up. The base monthly fee covers the ongoing time and cost associated with the program regardless of pickups. This includes things like customer communication, managing the sign-up process, the cost of the bins, etc.

The separate pick-up charge covers costs associated with collecting your materials each time: the labor, fuel, processing fees, etc.

How big is the Recycle+ bin?

It's an 18-gallon bin. It comes with a domed lid that adds another 2 gallons to the capacity. The dimensions are 18.3"D x 27.75"W x 13.5" H (17.5"H with the lid on).

Why are plastic bags used for separating materials?

Existing lifecycle analysis (LCA) research for grocery bags shows that when choosing between plastic and cotton to manufacture bags, the environmental impact of cotton appears to be higher than that for a variety of plastics for several indicators including climate change and resource depletion.

The production of fabric bags comes with its own environmental footprint that starts with the impacts of agriculture. Depending on the environmental indicator in question, the LCAs estimate cotton bags may need to be reused hundreds or thousands of times to equal that of single use plastic bags.

While grocery bag LCA results are not directly applicable to the bags used in this new collection service, the research shows that choosing cotton over plastic is not automatically an environmental win in all situations.

Reuse of bags in the Recycle+ program, regardless of material type, has not been determined to be feasible at this time. The plastic bags must be 30% post-consumer recycled content, unless unavailable in the marketplace. Bags will be recycled once emptied. Staff will keep an eye out for updated research and continue to look for ways to increase the value of this collection service for customers and for the planet.

Why can't I use my own plastic bags to separate materials in the bin?

It's crucial to the success of the program that materials be free of contamination when they're sent to their end markets. The bags need to be transparent so that your driver can quickly see if there's any contamination in the materials they're collecting. Common household bags reused by customers are opaque. They're also often smaller in size, which may prevent items from being fully contained and protected from the elements once collected.

Why can't I put Recycle+ items in my regular recycle bin?

It's important for the items accepted in your standard recycling cart to stay consistent. The sorting equipment that separates everything is finely tuned for these items alone so that they don't end up in the wrong place as contamination. Also, these items have many stable end markets. This means we can be confident they'll be recycled. (In Oregon, it's actually illegal for items collected as recycling to be thrown away.) Approximately 42,000,000 lbs of these recyclable materials are collected by certificated haulers per year!

Additional items, like those collected by Recycle+, have few markets, and can't be separated from the mixed recycling. Depots have been a way to collect these materials separately, and now Recycle+ offers a convenient way to have them collected at home. We will stay in close communication with garbage and recycling companies and Recycle+ customers, in the event that markets change.

This may be changing in the next 3-5 years. The state of Oregon is working to make recycling easier. The [Recycling Modernization Act](#) will expand access to recycling services and upgrade the facilities that sort recyclables.

For the clear plastic #1 clamshell containers - why do they have to hinged?

Rigid PET plastic recycling markets are new and emerging. Currently, the markets we are accessing are most interested in the clamshell containers (these markets are associated with berry producers and many of the recycled clamshells are also coming from berry containers). Rigid #1 PET plastic thermoforms vary in their thickness and combination with other types of plastic or materials like adhesives and other packaging.

Focusing on hinged clamshells that are made from clear #1 PET helps ensure a clean material is collected and delivered to this new/emerging market. #1 PET recycling markets are quickly growing and maturing which may increase the potential for additional types of rigid #1 PET to be added to Recycle+ in the future.

Why are the textiles only down-cycled and not actually donated?

We encourage community to donate textiles in good condition through local organizations of their choosing, or share through community swaps or buy nothing groups. Check [What to Recycle and Where](#) for donation options near you. Recycle+ provides a recycling option for textiles that aren't in good condition.

Stay tuned: Recycle+ will be partnering with local organizations to hold special reuse drives starting later this year. We'll be working closely with these organizations and our Recycle+ community members to get valuable items in the hands of community members that need them, so as not to inadvertently overwhelm them.

Why are CFL bulbs the only light bulbs accepted?

CFL bulbs contain hazardous chemicals, like small amounts of mercury, that should be removed from the waste stream before being landfilled. LED and Incandescent bulbs do not include any hazardous substances and are mostly made of various types of plastic, glass and small amounts of metal. In most recycling processes the LED and Incandescent bulbs are ground up into a mix that can be screened for small amounts of metal and the rest shipped out for disposal or alternative daily cover at a landfill. We did not want to include these items in Recycle+ if they were potentially ending up at the same destination as if they were in the garbage bin.

What about Styrofoam, will this be added to the list in the future?

We expect the list to change over time, based on interest from community, market availability and environmental benefit. Right now, the environmental benefits associated with collecting expanded polystyrene (EPS) for chemical recycling (which is the only outlet available in the region) are not clear. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is evaluating a variety of materials, including EPS, to determine whether it makes sense to recycle them. As we learn more about chemical recycling of EPS, and if there is a clear environmental benefit associated with collecting and recycling it, we may consider adding it to Recycle+ in the future.