

Can I Recycle That...?  
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Conservation Corner March 2019

Have you ever found yourself standing before your recycling bin with a bewildered look on your face, a disposable item in hand? You're not alone! Understanding how to properly dispose of the items we discard can be tricky, especially when you receive mixed messages from product manufacturers and marketing. It is important to remember that recycling is different in every community. The recyclability of items largely depends on a community's scale and proximity to recycling markets. The best thing to do when questioning whether something can be recycled is to check with your local waste hauler. Ashland and Talent are both served by Recology and information about what can be recycled locally is available on their website.

However, if you're looking for a quick guide to answer your questions about some of the peskiest items, we have your answers here!

**Plastic Bags/Wrapping:** Plastic bags and soft plastic wrapping *cannot* be recycled in your curbside bin! Unfortunately, if placed in your commingled recycling, the plastic bags get tangled in the recycling equipment at the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) and results in dangerous and costly repairs. If you have plastic bags or wrapping for recycling, check with your local grocers for special collection bins. You can also bring your soft plastics (i.e. plastic bags, plastic wrap, etc.) to Ashland's Recycle Center on Water Street for recycling.

**Styrofoam:** Did you know that Styrofoam is comprised of 99% air?! This makes recycling it very costly, as all air must be removed and a large volume of the compressed Styrofoam has to be collected and stored in order to ship it to a processor. Unfortunately, that means that we cannot recycle Styrofoam at this time, so be sure to avoid using it or place it in your garbage bin.

**Cans & Bottles:** Oregon is one of a few states with a Bottle Bill. Most beverage containers sold in Oregon (except for milk and wine) require a deposit that can be redeemed upon return of the container at an approved redemption center. In Ashland, you can bring them to any grocery store to get the ten cent redemption value. Make sure to remove all lids or caps and empty any liquid. If you don't want to collect the redemption value, you can also place these containers in your curbside bin or offer them to someone else to bring in for redemption.

**Lids/Bottle Caps:** **ALL** lids and caps belong in the trash. Unfortunately, the lids and caps are too small and flat to be captured in the mechanical sorting process. If you want to save your metal lids for recycling, bring them to the Ashland Recycle Center or Valley View Transfer Station and ask an attendant for the metal lid recycling section. Be sure not to throw the metal lids in with commingle recycling. Make sure to remove **ALL** other lids and place them in the trashcan, not your recycle bin.

**Disposable Cups:** Whether paper, plastic, or Styrofoam, cups are *not* recyclable anywhere in southern Oregon. If you must use a disposable cup, be sure to put it in your trashcan. Better yet, avoid using them all together by bringing your own cup or thermos for your favorite beverage!

**Cartons/Aseptic Containers:** What in the world is an aseptic container, you ask? Aseptic containers, sometimes referred to as Tetra Paks, are the rectangular containers that you may buy soups, non-dairy milks, or coconut water in. These containers often have a recycle symbol printed right on the package, however these cartons **ARE NOT** recyclable in southern Oregon. This is the perfect example of a time that you *cannot* trust the label, as these cartons are not

universally recyclable despite what the package tells you. Similarly, waxed paper cartons like those you find milk or juice in are destined for the landfill. Be sure to discard of all paper-type cartons in the trash.

**Clamshells:** Sometimes you may find yourself with a clamshell, not the ones from the ocean, the plastic kind that you get with take-out orders or produce. This is another item that we often feel compelled to recycle, but don't! These clamshell containers are not recyclable in southern Oregon and need to be avoided or sent to the landfill. While we're at it, the same rule goes for most food-carting materials, aside from rigid tubs (such as yogurt tubs) or cardboard boxes from cereal or crackers. Any paper-type material that your food directly touches is *not* recyclable.