

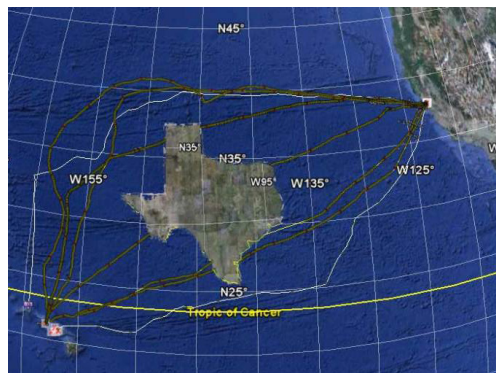
BY MANJULA CARTER



The U.S. produces about 34.5 million tons of plastic waste each year; that's enough to fill the Houston Astrodome 1,000 times!

**Some things
are bigger
than Texas...**

**Like the Pacific
Garbage Patch
off the coast
of California.**



German cosmonaut, Sigmund Jahn famously said, "Only when I saw the Earth from space, in all its ineffable beauty and fragility, did I realize that humankind's most urgent task is to cherish and preserve it for future generations." Despite these words of caution in 1978, destruction and pollution of the environment have continued at an alarming rate. The United States produces about 34.5 million tons of plastic waste each year; that's enough to fill the Houston Astrodome 1,000 times!

When a discarded plastic bag or bottle ends up in the ocean, it erodes into tiny plastic particles. These particles form a vortex of debris called the Pacific Garbage Patch, which is now more than twice the size of Texas! The particles are ingested by aquatic animals and birds with devastating effects. Faced with such a huge global problem, it might seem impossible to make a difference, but sometimes the solution to enormous problems begins with one simple step. We can begin by generating less waste and learning to recycle correctly.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of tons of U.S. plastic waste are being shipped to other countries for recycling. Anywhere from 20 to 70 percent of the plastic entering recycling facilities around the globe is discarded because of contamination. Most of us are familiar with the recycling symbol of three chasing arrows. Contrary to what most of us believe, not every item stamped with this symbol is recyclable. The plastics industry introduced the symbol in 1970. It was developed, using the numbers one through seven inside the triangle, as a method to show the grade of plastic and to indicate its recyclability. Plastic grades one and two are the most widely recyclable and include plastic bottles, milk jugs, laundry detergent containers and other similar items. Grades three through seven are soft plastics and are much less consistently recyclable in the United States.

Most curbside recycling programs collect paper, cardboard and plastics in the same bins and send the collection to sorting and processing facilities. The mixing of materials and different plastic grades makes sorting a challenge to the recycling process. Some items are composites of multiple materials that do more harm than good when put in curbside recycle bins.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF PLASTIC

DO NOT RECYCLE

- That disposable paper cup from your favorite coffee shop is most likely NOT recyclable! They line these cups with a thin plastic coating that is almost impossible to separate from the cup itself.
- Toothpaste tubes may have a plastic exterior, but they are often lined with other materials such as aluminum.
- Toothbrushes have hard plastics in the handle, but soft plastic bristles.
- Clamshell containers, such as the ones containing strawberries at the grocery store and most takeout containers from your favorite restaurant, have soft plastic in the hinge and a harder plastic shell.

All these items should be kept out of your curbside bin.

Are you a socially conscious person who has been “helpfully” putting recyclables in a plastic bag before placing them in the curbside bin? It turns out that plastic bags are the number one enemy of recycling facilities. They quickly degrade and clog up expensive sorting equipment. Instead, use your well-intentioned efforts to put recyclable items directly in the bin and take plastic bags to your local grocery store recycle station.

Waste Management is the company that manages curbside recycling for the City of Texarkana, TX. Greta Calvery, WM Public Affairs Manager, says, “the most common contaminants in curbside recycling are foam cups and containers, glass, clothing, and food.” She explained, “Clothing can wrap around equipment and conveyor belts at the recycling facility, shutting them down. In Texarkana, recycling carts that are heavily contaminated are tagged and the contamination must be removed before the recycling facility will accept it.” This is one more obstacle that slows down the entire process.

SO, WHAT CAN WE RECYCLE?

Here is a list offered by Waste Management:

- DO recycle plastic bottles, jugs, and containers, rinsed out with caps screwed on tightly. Loose caps fall through sorting screens and end up in the trash.
- DO recycle rinsed out food and beverage cans. There is no need to remove labels.
- DO recycle all paper.
- DO recycle flattened cardboard and paperboard.
- DO recycle food and beverage cartons, rinsed out with caps screwed on tightly.

Remember that food waste, plastic bags or film, and Styrofoam products have no place in the recycle bin. Other items to keep out of the curbside bin are glass bottles or containers, batteries and electronics, clothing, and yard waste.

Curbside recycling is offered to residents of Texarkana, Texas by Waste Management. Texarkana, Arkansas residents do not have curbside service, but can take items to the Recycling Center located at 2601 Dudley Street. The New Boston Landfill offers free recycling for a variety of electronics including cell phones, computers, and printers to all Texarkana residents. You can find out more information about recycling procedures at www.wm.com and www.earth911.com.

Waste Management reported from January through May 2020, Texarkana residents generated 4,449 tons of waste. Of this total, 551 tons were recycled (12%) and 674 tons was yard waste (15%). So, the total diverted from landfill was 1,225 tons (22%). This is the environmental equivalent of keeping 385 cars off the road and saving 200,441 gallons of gasoline! While it may seem like pollution is an overwhelming problem, too big for individuals, these numbers show how even our simplest efforts can make a difference. Now more than ever, we all need to do our part! The future of the planet is in our hands. 🌍

RECYCLE RIGHTSM



Always recycle:

Recicle siempre:



Plastic Bottles & Containers

Botellas y envases de plástico



Food & Beverage Cans

Latas de alimentos y bebidas



Paper

Papeles



Flattened Cardboard & Paperboard

Cartón y cartulina aplastados



Glass Bottles & Containers

Botellas y envases de vidrio

DO NOT include in your mixed recycling container: **NO** incluir en su contenedor de reciclaje mixto:



NO Food or Liquids

NO comida o líquidos



NO Foam Cups & Containers

NO vasos y recipientes de poliestireno



NO Loose Plastic Bags, Bagged Recyclables or Film

Empty recyclables directly into your cart
NO bolsas y envolturas de plástico sueltas, o materiales reciclables embolsados

Vacíe directamente los materiales reciclables en nuestro carrito



NO Batteries – check local drop-off programs for proper disposal

NO baterías - Verifique los programas locales de entrega para su correcta eliminación



NO Green Waste

NO desechos verdes



NO Clothing, Furniture & Carpet

NO ropa, muebles y alfombras



**RECYCLE OFTEN.
RECYCLE RIGHT.[®]**

To Learn More Visit:

Para más información, visite:

RecycleOftenRecycleRight.com

#Recycling101

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RECYCLE OFTEN.
RECYCLE RIGHT.™



Most Common Contaminants

Keep these common contaminants OUT of your recycling bin.



NO Recyclables in Plastic Bags

Empty loose recyclables in bin but leave the plastic bag out.



NO Food & liquids

Compost instead! Otherwise, it belongs in the trash.



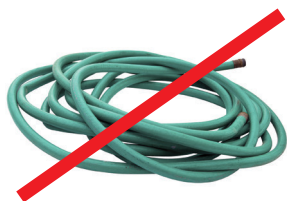
NO Electronics & Small Appliances

Donate if in good condition, or schedule a bulky item pickup, if available. Check earth911.com for a local drop off site.



NO Textiles, Bedding, Rugs & Carpet

Donate these items if they are in good condition. Large quantities may require special disposal.



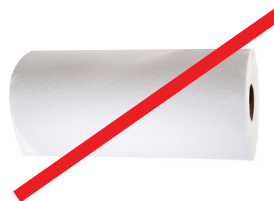
NO Hoses, Holiday Lights, Hangers & Extension Cords

They wrap around equipment and can shut down an entire facility! They all go in the trash.



NO Plastic Bags, Film/Sheeting & Flexible Film Packaging

Take plastic bags back to a local grocer to keep bags clean and dry, and prevent them from shutting down recycling facilities. Visit plasticfilmrecycling.org to find a drop off location near you.



NO Paper Napkins, Plates, Cups & Tissues

Compost if possible, and remember to recycle the cardboard tube.



NO Polystyrene Foam

Foam and plastic to-go containers are not recyclable curbside. Find drop off programs for items like foam packing peanuts at earth911.com.



NO Tires, Auto Parts & Scrap Metal

(Not in recycling or trash) Can damage equipment & are safety hazards. Contact local scrap recyclers or retail tire stores for recycling options, or check earth911.com for a drop off center near you.



NO Concrete, Wood & Construction Debris

Can damage equipment & are safety hazards. You may be able to schedule a bulky item pickup – otherwise throw it in the trash or order a roll off bin by contacting Waste Management Customer Service.



NO Yard Waste & Wood

Compost or put in your yard waste cart, if available. Otherwise, it belongs in the trash.



NO Non-Recyclable Plastic

Not everything that is plastic is recyclable! Recycle only food & beverage bottles, jugs and tubs.

For more information on recycling, visit
RecycleOftenRecycleRight.com