

Organic Waste Recycling Collection

Click on the question to view the answer.

GENERAL

- [What is Senate Bill 1383?](#)
- [What is “organic waste?”](#)
- [What will I be able to put in the organic waste recycling bin?](#)
- [Will I be able to put dairy items in the organic waste bin?](#)
- [When is organic waste recycling collection starting?](#)
- [Why is the City requiring mandatory organic waste recycling?](#)
- [What is the City doing now?](#)
- [Will the organic waste bin start to smell or get dirty because of the food scraps collected?](#)
- [How are food scraps and yard trimmings processed into compost?](#)
- [Why can't I use plastic bags in the organic waste bin?](#)
- [Can I toss products labeled as “compostable” or “biodegradable” in the organic waste bin?](#)
- [I do not wish to participate. How do I opt out?](#)

RESIDENT – CITY CURBSIDE CUSTOMER (SERVICED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT)

- [When am I getting my green bin?](#)
- [How can I find out if my house is starting in the new curbside food scrap collection?](#)
- [I already have a green bin at home. Can I start adding food scraps to my green bin now?](#)
- [What will happen when this new collection starts at my home?](#)

RESIDENT – MULTIFAMILY APARTMENTS & CONDOS (SERVICED BY A PRIVATE HAULER)

- [When am I getting my organic waste bin at my building?](#)
- [I am a resident at an apartment building. My property manager won't provide us with a bin for food scraps, food-soiled paper and yard waste. What can I do?](#)
- [What will happen when this starts at my apartment or condo building?](#)

BUSINESS

- [When am I getting my organic waste recycling bin?](#)
- [Who is going to clean my organic waste bin?](#)

GENERAL

1. What is Senate Bill 1383?

California Senate Bill 1383 (SB 1383) requires all residents and businesses to reduce organic waste (food scraps, yard waste, etc.) sent to the landfill. When organic waste decomposes it releases methane, a harmful gas that traps the sun's heat and contributes to climate change. Recycling organic waste will result in compost for plant growth and help reduce the impacts of climate change.

Business sectors that generate large amounts of surplus edible food will be required to have an edible food recovery program. The City sent a notification mailer to businesses that were identified as [Tier One Commercial Edible Food Generators](#) under SB 1383 criteria and need to have an edible food recovery program.

2. What is "organic waste?"

A helpful reminder is if it grows it goes in the green organic waste recycling bin! If the waste item grew out of the ground or off a tree then it is capable of decaying and should be added to your organic waste recycling bin. Acceptable items include fruit and vegetable peels; coffee grounds and filters; plate scrapings including rice, beans, cooked food; food-soiled paper napkins, plant clippings, other yard trimmings and untreated wood waste.

3. What will I be able to put in the organic waste recycling bin?

Residents and businesses will be able to place food scraps, food-soiled paper and yard trimmings in their organic waste recycling bin following notification by the City.

Residents with collection service by the City's Environmental Services Department that currently have a curbside automated green bin for yard waste may add food scraps and food-soiled paper to it when notified by the City.

Residents with collection service by the City's Environmental Services Department but do not have a curbside automated green bin will receive a new green bin by delivery.

4. Will I be able to put dairy items in the organic waste bin?

Yes, dairy products may go in the green bin.

To keep your green bin clean try:

- Wrapping your food scraps in paper napkins, paper towels, newspaper or a paper bag.
- Placing food in the freezer or refrigerator and taking it to the organic waste bin before scheduled pick up. Frozen food scraps slow down the decomposition process and can help prevent odors and pests.
- Keeping your green bin lids closed and out of direct sunlight, if possible.

5. When is organic waste recycling collection starting?

The new recycling rules are a big change from the way we normally do things. The City is working on an implementation plan and the program will begin when essential equipment, staff and policies are in place. Check the City's [website](#) for the latest information.

Yard waste recycling collection is available for some City serviced single-family homes.

Food scraps and yard waste recycling is available for businesses and multifamily properties. Please email sdrecyclingworks@sandiego.gov for more information or to request technical assistance on how to get started.

6. Why is the City requiring mandatory organic waste recycling?

The City is complying with a state mandate that includes financial penalties for non-compliance following an extensive educational outreach phase. Organic waste recycling keeps food and yard waste out of the landfill which helps reduce the amount of methane released into the atmosphere. Reducing what we throw in the trash helps San Diego get closer to the [City's Climate Action](#) and Zero Waste Plan goals of zero waste by year 2040. Zero waste means diverting as much material and resources from the landfill through reducing, reusing, recycling and composting.

As a result of so much organic material being processed into compost, our soils will benefit greatly! The contents in the organic waste bins are processed at a facility where it is turned into a nutrient-rich soil additive for farmers and gardeners to grow food and plants.

7. What is the City doing now?

The City of San Diego is in the process of developing collection operations, adopting purchasing policies, amending the City's [Municipal Recycling Code](#), enacting building requirements, preparing enforcement responsibilities and preparing public education efforts.

Businesses and multifamily properties may request assistance now with on-site food scraps recycling collection. Contact the Environmental Services Department at sdrecyclingworks@sandiego.gov or 858-694-7000 for assistance.

8. Will the organic waste bin start to smell or get dirty because of the food scraps collected?

To minimize odors, you can slow down the decomposition process and keep your bin clean with the following tips:

- Collect your food scraps in a small container and place it in your freezer before emptying it into your outdoor green bin.
- Drain as much liquid as possible from wet food scraps before adding to the green bin.
- Wrap food scraps in a paper towel or paper napkins, old newspaper, or paper bag before tossing in the green bin.
- Layer yard trimmings then food scraps inside the bin with a layer of yard trimmings at the top to act as a cover.
- Sprinkle baking soda in your green bin.
- Keep your green bin in a shaded area with the lid closed at all times.
- Rinse your green bin with mild soap and water when necessary. Make sure to pour dirty water onto your lawn and not in the storm drain.

9. How are food scraps and yard waste processed into compost?

At the Miramar Greenery, yard waste and food scraps are processed into compost in a Covered Aerated Static Pile system. The organic waste material is ground up and placed in 100-foot-long piles on top of perforated pipes. The pipes attach to a fan that blows air into the piles. A special fabric cover is placed on each pile and causes condensation that provides moisture. The air and moisture allow for microorganisms to convert the material into compost. During this process, the piles reach temperatures as high as 160°F that eliminate harmful microorganisms known as pathogens but maintains beneficial soil nutrients.

10. Why can't I use plastic bags in the organic waste bin?

Plastic bags are not accepted in green bins because plastic does not decompose and is considered to be trash that does not belong in the finished compost product. At the Miramar Greenery facility, compostable and biodegradable bags also do not consistently break down, are difficult to sift out, and result in contamination that decreases the quality of compost. The finished compost should be free of contamination and of a good quality for use on soils.

We discourage the use of plastic liners to avoid additional waste. If you use plastic liners, please make sure to empty the contents into the green bin and throw the plastic liner in the trash bin.

11. Can I toss products labeled as "compostable" or "biodegradable" in the organic waste bin?

No, products labeled "compostable" or "biodegradable" including items such as bags, takeout containers, coffee pods, food packaging, cups, plates and service ware are not accepted in the green bin. This also includes items displaying a green or brown symbol, bioplastics which are plastics made from organic material rather than fossil fuels (Polylactic PLA and #7 labeled plastics with a chasing arrow are examples of bioplastics) are not accepted in the green bin. As a reminder, please do not recycle PLA or other types of compostable or biodegradable plastics in your recycling bin. All compostable or biodegradable products should be placed in the trash bin.

San Diego's Miramar Greenery composting facility cannot break down these types of compostable products. If these items are placed in the green composting bin they will cause contamination and diminish the quality of the finished compost.

12. I do not wish to participate. How do I opt out?

California state law mandates that all residents and businesses reduce organic waste (food scraps and yard trimmings) sent to landfills. It is one of the easiest things we can do to curb climate change.

RESIDENT – CITY CURBSIDE CUSTOMER (SERVICED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT)

1. When am I getting my green bin at my building?

The City is currently working on an implementation plan. The program will begin when essential equipment, staff and policies are in place. Households will be notified in advance of the delivery and will also receive a new weekly pick up schedule.

2. How can I find out if my house is starting in the new food and yard waste collection?

Information about the new food and yard waste collection will be provided to City of San Diego households in advance of the program start date. Information will be mailed, and a notification door hanger and compost kitchen pail will be placed at applicable household doors. Do not begin organic recycling until you have been notified by the City.

3. I already have a green bin at home. Can I start adding food scraps to my green bin now?

No. If you have a green curbside bin at home now, please continue to only place yard waste inside. This includes grass, leaves, branches and other plant trimmings. The City will notify your home with a mailer when you will be able to start adding food scraps and food-soiled paper with your yard trimmings.

4. What will happen when this new collection starts at my home?

Residents will be asked to place food scraps and food-soiled paper along with their yard waste in their green bin and not in the trash. Your green bin will be picked up weekly. The City will also be providing residents a new, free kitchen pail to make it easier for you to collect fruit and vegetable peels, plate scrapings, spoiled food and food-soiled paper from your food preparation area.

RESIDENT – MULTIFAMILY APARTMENTS & CONDOS (SERVICED BY A PRIVATE HAULER)

1. When am I getting my organic waste bin?

Apartment and condo property owners that receive trash and recycling collection service from a private waste hauler will be required to order and pay for new organic waste recycling collection service from a private waste hauler. This will include providing a separate organic waste bin for residents in the building to dispose of all food-scrap, food-soiled paper and yard waste in addition to the trash and recycling containers. The organic waste bin must be picked up weekly from the property.

Property owners should contact a franchise private hauler for assistance with ordering new organic waste recycling service. You can also email sdrecyclingworks@sandiego.gov to request technical assistance. A Recycling Specialist is available to visit your property to help determine the appropriate bin size and location for your new organic waste recycling bin and provide education resources for your tenants.

2. I am a resident at an apartment building. My property manager won't provide us with a bin for food scraps, food-soiled paper and yard waste. What can I do?

Please email sdrecyclingworks@sandiego.gov and a Recycling Specialist will contact your property owner or manager to notify them about the organic waste recycling collection requirement and guide them on how to order a new bin.

3. What will happen when this starts at my apartment or condo building?

Residents will be asked to place food scraps and food-soiled paper along with any yard waste in the green organic waste recycling bin and not in the trash.

BUSINESS

1. When am I getting my organic waste recycling bin?

Business or property owners that have trash and recycling collection service from a private waste hauler will be required to order and pay for new organic waste recycling collection service from a private waste hauler. This will include providing a separate organic waste bin for your business to dispose of all food-scrap, food-soiled paper, and yard waste in addition to the trash and recycling containers. The organic waste recycling bin must be picked up weekly from the property.

Please email sdrecyclingworks@sandiego.gov to request technical assistance to get started or contact a private waste hauler to order new organic waste recycling service. A Recycling Specialist is available to visit your business and help determine the appropriate bin size and location for your new organic waste bin and provide educational resources.

2. Who is going to clean my organic waste bin?

Cleaning services for bins used inside your business are subject to the terms of your collection service contract with your waste hauler or a contract with an independent bin-cleaning service. If your business has an organic waste dumpster, waste haulers are responsible for maintaining these outdoor dumpsters.