



**FOOD SCRAPS RECYCLING**

# How-To Guide

## for Apartments and Condos

FOR PROPERTY MANAGERS AND STRATAS



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SERVICES AND SOLUTIONS FOR A LIVABLE REGION



# Dear Property Managers:

The Organics Disposal Ban is a new rule that came into effect January 1, 2015, and encourages residents and businesses to separate food waste from regular garbage. Instead of being thrown away, food scraps will be separated from regular garbage, put into a green bin, and recycled into compost or biofuel. The rule applies to all residential and commercial garbage in the region.

Recognizing that this is a big change for property managers, strata corporations, condominium owners and residents, there is a six-month education period from January to June 2015. Starting July 2015, penalties can be applied to loads of garbage containing more than 25% visible food. The acceptable amount of food in the garbage will decrease over the next few years.

This **"How-to Guide for Apartments and Condos"** is designed to help you establish a plan for food scraps recycling in your building. It provides information, tips and links to resource materials you can use to inform residents about the changes, and to help you implement your program.

For more information, please visit the Metro Vancouver website at [metrovancover.org/foodscraps](http://metrovancover.org/foodscraps) for practical tools and resources.

Thank you for participating in food scraps recycling and for helping reduce the amount of garbage produced in the region.



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# Introduction to Food Scraps Recycling

Metro Vancouver's new Organics Disposal Ban requires everyone to separate food scraps and food soiled paper from their regular garbage, just as they separate their other recyclables from their garbage.

Over 30% of the garbage in Metro Vancouver's landfills is organic material that could have been recycled. Food scraps can be recycled into useful material, such as compost for local gardens and farms.

When food scraps end up in the garbage they:

- Create methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that adds to global warming.
- Use up a lot of landfill space. Space is limited, and creating more landfills is undesirable. In the landfill, buried under layers of waste and without access to oxygen, food can't decompose properly.
- Waste all the resources (energy, water, etc.) that went into producing the food.
- Waste opportunities to create new soil and promote more food production.

The most important message to share with residents is **"Food isn't garbage and it belongs in the green bin"**. Many people believe that food will simply decompose naturally once in a landfill and are unaware of the negative effects decomposing food has on the environment.

Separating food scraps for composting is the best way to manage food scraps. Avoid using food grinders – food waste is hard on the sewer system and does not produce valuable compost or biofuel.

## FOOD SCRAPS COLLECTION 1-2-3

1. Residents put their food scraps into a separate container.
2. They empty their food scraps container into a green bin on the building property.
3. The waste hauler will remove the green bin and take the food scraps to a composting facility.

## SCHEDULE AND TIMING

Larger buildings often use a phased approach and roll out their food scraps recycling a few building floors at a time. Provide residents at least four to six weeks' notice before changes take place.

## Food Scraps: What's In, What's Out

The food scraps recycling program allows residents to put all food, such as meat, cheese, dairy, bones, fruit, vegetables and coffee grounds into the green bin. Some food soiled paper such as pizza boxes, paper towels and napkins can also be collected. Yard waste can be emptied into the same green bin to be sent to a composting facility.

### Can we put food scraps in plastic bags?

Plastic bags, including those marked biodegradable or compostable, do not belong in the green bin. Organics processors cannot handle plastics. If you choose to line your kitchen container or green bin, use paper bags and newspapers.

Some haulers allow the use of certain plastic liners. When negotiating an agreement with your hauler, establish what type of liners can be used and clarify the costs associated.



**YES** to food scraps, plate scrapings, floral waste and food soiled paper.



**NO** to cups, cartons, containers, plastic bags, bread ties, rubber bands and pet waste.



# Setting up Food Scraps Recycling (“Green Bin”) in your Building

## STEP 1: IDENTIFY RESPONSIBLE PERSONNEL

Begin by identifying who will be responsible for coordinating and monitoring your building’s food scraps recycling program.

- **Planner** – Manages the building’s food scraps recycling plan, selects hauler, and coordinates green bin delivery and pick up
- **Monitor** – Checks green bins for contamination and makes sure bin area is clean and tidy and bins are secure
- **Resident liaison** – Lets residents know about food scraps recycling and answers their questions

## STEP 2: SPEAK TO YOUR HAULER AND SET-UP SERVICE

Before you implement food scraps recycling, refer to the “Green Bins” guide on the next page to estimate how many green bins you will need for the building. You can also do a waste audit to see how much garbage is produced. A team of dedicated residents can perform this task.

Green bins should be centrally located and easily accessible to residents and your waste hauler. Ensure that the area is well lit and tidy, with no obstructions that would make disposing and collecting food scraps difficult or inconvenient for people.

Costs for waste removal vary; contact your waste hauler for a quote. Some municipalities offer collection services for multi-family buildings – check with yours. Reducing the amount of food waste generated by building residents may help to reduce hauling costs.

As residents recycle more food scraps, some buildings can switch to smaller garbage bins or less frequent collection.

***Make sure your green bins are easily accessible for residents and the waste hauler.***



HOW MANY GREEN BINS DOES YOUR COMPLEX NEED?

Use this guide to estimate how many green bins you need.  
These numbers are based on a once-a-week collection schedule.  
Please confirm collection services with your hauler.

| NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL UNITS | NUMBER OF GREEN BINS (240 LITRE BIN)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5-10                        | 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 11-30                       | 1-2                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 31-50                       | 2                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 51-70                       | 3                                                                                      |
| 71-90                       | 4     |
| 91-100                      | 4     |





## Green Bin Tips

**Keep pests and odour to a minimum with these tips:**

**LINE IT** – Line the bottom of the green bin with newsprint, cardboard, or yard trimmings each time your bin is emptied. This will help absorb liquid and prevent food from sticking to the bin. If possible, allow your grass clippings and leaves to dry before placing in the Green Bin.

**LAYER IT** – Alternate layers of kitchen food scraps with yard trimmings (e.g. leaves, dead plants) or newspaper to keep the bin dry.

**SET IT OUT** – Always set the bin out for collection as scheduled, even when it's not full.

**RINSE IT** – Rinse your Green bin after pick-up with mild detergent or vinegar/ water solution, then sprinkle the bin with a small amount of baking soda. Consider hiring a private company to clean your green bin (Call 604-RECYCLE for more information).

**STORE IT RIGHT** – If your green bin is stored outdoors, choose a ventilated, shady location that is convenient for residents.





### STEP 3: TELL YOUR RESIDENTS ABOUT FOOD SCRAPS RECYCLING

Here are some tips to help with getting residents on board with food scraps recycling. Provide at least four to six weeks notice before the program begins.

#### Involve residents early

- Invite residents to be part of the planning process
- Host a "By Invitation Only" opportunity for select residents to participate in a pilot food scraps recycling program before other residents
- Recruit a team of dedicated resident volunteers
- Promote the program door-to-door
- Promote the program at resident or strata meetings
- Communicate with residents who do not speak English
- Encourage neighbours to participate
- Report any problems or issues with the program
- Welcome new residents and provide information on food scraps recycling

#### Get the word out

- Schedule opportunities to speak to residents:
  - Host a "lobby talk" where residents can ask questions and get information
  - Invite residents to a workshop and brief them on your food scraps recycling plan
- Send emails and letters to residents about food scraps recycling
- If you have a Facebook page, share news about food scraps recycling and how people can get involved
- Walk residents through your plan and show them where green bins will be placed
- Share the "What's In, What's Out" poster and post in common areas
- Thank residents for their participation and support

### Provide tools and tips

- Give suggestions on how to organize kitchen space and where to put a food scraps container
- Suggest containers they can use, such as large yogurt or ice cream containers, or a glass bowl with a plate lid, or provide residents with small kitchen containers at a discounted rate
- Teach residents how to line their kitchen containers with newspaper
- If requested, visit residents to talk about food scraps recycling
- Direct residents to the Metro Vancouver website for information

### Ask for feedback

- Share contact information for who to call with questions or concerns
- Encourage questions and feedback on how to make food scraps recycling better
- Make food scraps recycling a standing agenda item at meetings with residents or the strata, or at annual general meetings

### Provide updates and reminders

- Provide updates to residents and include fun facts (e.g. amount of food scraps sent to the composting facility)
- Send reminders about when and how the program will be rolled out



## **STEP 4: IMPLEMENT FOOD SCRAPS RECYCLING**

Once you have planned your program and notified residents, it's time to launch your program.

During the first few weeks of the program launch, you will want to:

- Print and put up posters to clearly label the green bins
- Communicate to residents that the green bins have arrived and to start using them for food scraps recycling
- Ensure the recycling areas and green bins are clean and tidy to prevent pests and rodents
- Do site checks to ensure you have enough green bins
- Replace posters or labels that are damaged or missing
- Talk to your building occupants and ask them if they require assistance or advice to manage their waste
- Talk to your waste hauler and make changes to your collection schedule, as needed

A sample poster and letter is available at [metrovancover.org/foodscraps](http://metrovancover.org/foodscraps).

## **STEP 5: MONITOR AND RE-EDUCATE**

Regular monitoring will let you know if you have too many, or too few, green bins. You'll also need to check for bin contamination when non-organic materials turn up in the green bins.

Document the progress of your building's food scraps separation. You can do so by performing a visual check throughout the week and estimating the percentage of non-organic versus organic material in the green bin.

You will need to re-educate residents along the way. Continue to promote food scraps recycling by sending friendly reminders. Address problems quickly and share successes often.

If a resident has gone the extra mile and wants to be acknowledged, post their photo and a note recognizing their great work. Request testimonials from residents and post in common areas or include in your building's newsletter if you have one.

# Managing Your Green Bin

As with garbage bins, pests and odours can be kept to a minimum with regular emptying and cleaning of kitchen containers and green bins. Wrapping fish and meat bones in newspapers also helps keep bins clean.

## **Pests and odours**

Line the bottom of your bin with newspaper each time it is emptied. Regular cleaning of your bin with a garden hose and mild detergent will help reduce odours and keep pests away. Alternatively, ask your hauler if they provide bin cleaning, or if they can switch out for clean bins, as part of their services. Private bin cleaning services are available.

### *Flies and insects:*

- Keep bins, particularly those containing meat and protein, closed as much as possible
- Make layers: alternate food scraps with shredded paper, napkins, newspapers or other paper products. If possible, keep a stack of newspapers in a dry area next to your food scraps bins and ask residents to layer

### *Rodents:*

- Lock your bins and keep indoors as much as possible
- To prevent animals from accessing the bins, keep bins away from fences, trees, picnic tables, outdoor gathering areas and playgrounds

### *Warmer weather collection tips:*

- Keep your bins in shaded or covered areas
- Provide residents with a food scraps collection schedule and ask them to dispose of food closer to collection day
- Wrap meat such as poultry, fish and beef in newspaper to limit exposure to air
- Ask your hauler for more frequent collection, if needed

### Reducing food waste

While recycling food scraps is good, preventing food waste is even better. By separating food scraps from garbage, residents may come to realize over time how much food is unnecessarily wasted. Reducing food waste will also reduce hauling costs.

### Other recycling

Encourage residents to continue putting their recyclables into the designated recycling bins. The Recycling Council of BC hotline at 604-RECYCLE (604-732-9253) can provide you with information, resources and recommendations on how to expand and manage your building's non-organics recycling program.



***Need more info?  
Call the Recycling Council  
of BC hotline at 604-RECYCLE  
(604-732-9253).***

# Glossary

**Contamination** – The placement of non-organics in an organics only collection bin. Contaminants include metals, plastics and plastic bags, clean wood, and other waste.

**Green bin** – A designated container for food scraps, food-soiled paper and organics only.

**Food scraps (organics)** – Includes all food waste such as meat, fish, cheese, dairy, bones, fruit and vegetables (raw or cooked).

**Food scraps recycling (organics recycling)** – The process of separating all food scraps from garbage. Food scraps are sent to a regional composting facility and turned into high-quality compost.

**Food-soiled paper** – Includes pizza boxes, paper towels and napkins, which can be placed into a green bin.

**Food waste** – Refers to once edible food that can no longer be consumed and has gone to waste.

**Kitchen container** – A receptacle or small container that can store food scraps before being emptied into the green bin.

**Metro Vancouver** – Metro Vancouver is a political body and corporate entity operating under provincial legislation as a 'regional district' and 'greater boards' that deliver regional services, policy and political leadership on behalf of 23 members.

**Organics Disposal Ban** – An action in Metro Vancouver's Integrated Solid Waste and Resource Management Plan to ban the disposal of organics into the landfill.

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## Need more information?

VISIT:

[metrovancover.org/foodscraps](http://metrovancover.org/foodscraps)

CALL:

Recycling Council of BC Recycling Hotline at 604-REC-YCLE (732-9253)



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