

# Local recycling myth busters

## Your Turn

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Guest columnist

**Myth:** Recycling is a farce; it all gets thrown away anyway.

**Answer:** No, recycling is not a farce. We're lucky to live in the Southeast, where markets exist for our recycled materials. Recycling is an entrenched industry, which creates thousands of jobs.

**Myth:** Just throw it all in the bin, and let someone else sort it out.

**Answer:** Please don't do that! It's important that we recycle the right way. Learn about what can and can't go in your bin. Check for information at [hrecycles.org](http://hrecycles.org) If our recycling stream is contaminated with non-recyclables, the county is not given proper revenue in return for what we collect, or we have to pay for its processing instead.

**Myth:** Recycling is the most environmental thing to do with unwanted containers.

**Answer:** No, reducing your waste in the first place is the best thing to do. Next, re-use things as much as possible. Then recycle. Use your trashcan as a last resort.

**Myth:** If a plastic container has a symbol #1 to #7 on it, it can be recycled.

**Answer:** No. Unfortunately, we can't go by the number codes anymore. The unregulated industries, both the packaging and plastic industries, use all kinds of laminates and additives to get different qualities, like clarity, flexibility, or heat-tolerance. These additives make it almost impossible to segregate them for recycling. A quick plastic recycling reference is to go by their shape: bottles, tubs, jugs and jars. Plus, no single-use plastics are accepted like drink cups or clear hinged clamshells.

**Myth:** More recycling education will fix the problem, and get us out of this mess.

**Answer:** No, we've been trying to educate for the last 40 years without much success. The rules keep changing about what we can and can't recycle. Without more top-down regulation and government support, we'll remain at a measly 25% waste reduction via recycling.

**Myth:** Styrofoam packaging has to be thrown away.

**Answer:** Not anymore! Henderson County has a densifier, and takes used foam at the Stoney Mountain Convenience Center on the second Tuesday of every month. Styrofoam to-go containers, plates, and egg cartons must be clean and dry. Styrofoam packaging is accepted, including coolers, and packaging around electronics, furniture, or appliances. Items not accepted include material covered in food residue, packing peanuts, craft or

floral foam, soft/flexible foam, and pipe insulation.

**Myth:** Cartons, sometimes called gable-tops, can't be recycled.

**Answer:** Yes they can! We're lucky to have a market for them, which is not the case in some areas. Examples: juice boxes, milk cartons, and soup or broth boxes.

**Myth:** I can't compost, I live in the city.

**Answer:** Yes you can! City and County residents can take their food waste to the convenience center on Stoney Mountain Road. Look for the roll-out containers marked compost.

**Myth:** I re-use plastic bags for can liners and dog poop, that's why I want them at the store checkout.

**Answer:** How many do you really need? Most shoppers end up with far too many. Remember to refuse bags if you can carry your purchase, and keep your cloth bags handy. Get in the habit of taking them in with you every time!

**Myth:** Grocery stores don't really recycle returned plastic bags.

**Answer:** Yes they do. Many grocers, like Ingles, Target, and Wal-mart, recycle the returned bags with the other film they use to transport on pallettes. Save and return your clean used plastic bags, usually coded #2 or #4, including most bread bags and ice bags.

**Myth:** Aluminum foil is OK to recycle.

**Answer:** No. The problem with foil is food residue. Food residue is the same reason we can't recycle pizza boxes. Unfortunately, pie plates cannot be recycled either.

**Myth:** Caps and jar lids should be removed.

**Answer:** It depends. It's fine to leave plastic lids on plastic bottles, but remove and dispose of the ones with pump mechanisms. If it's a metal lid on a glass jar, take the lids off. Plastic caps on aseptic cartons can be left on.

**Myth:** Rinsing your recycling isn't necessary.

**Answer:** No, rinsing your containers is important, but don't waste too much water. Just get the product's liquid and solids out with a quick rinse.

Recycling is a way of life. Thank you fellow recyclers, for making the effort to waste less, save energy and resources. For further information, visit Henderson County's website <https://www.hendersoncountync.gov/solid-waste/page/convenience-center-recycling>

**Note:** All recycling collected in Hendersonville and Henderson County goes to Curbie, a material recovery facility in Woodfin.

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