



www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash

Fall 2020

Responding to the Pandemic

Trash and recycling collection workers have one of the most dangerous jobs – and one of the most essential. Trying to keep our neighborhoods clean while avoiding contact with people or surfaces that may have been exposed to COVID-19 has been a challenge. You have probably seen some of the changes that waste haulers have made, such as requiring all trash and recycling to be in carts or bins. There have also been changes to the way yard waste and bulk pickups are handled – so be sure to check with your service provider.

Document Shredding Events were cancelled due to the pandemic, as many of the sites used for the events were closed. This is a great time to look at what you have and decide if it is really a confidential document. Does it have financial account numbers and data? Does it have social security numbers on it? Or does it just have your mailing address? We have noticed that much of what is brought to the shredding events is not, in fact, confidential, like birthday cards and past issues of old magazines.

Bag the (plastic) Bags

Fairfax County is one of the last places in the region that continues to allow plastic bags for the collection of yard waste. Plastic has become a serious threat to our environment, as it may shred into small pieces but does not break down completely. Microplastics have found their way into our soil, water, and the food we consume.

The Fairfax County Solid Waste Management Program strongly encourages everyone that rakes grass, leaves, and other yard waste to use a reusable container or compostable paper yard waste bags for the collection of yard waste when grasscycling or backyard composting is not an option. Plastic is not your only option!

You can fit so much more in your recycling bin when you flatten cardboard boxes!



Compostable paper yard waste bags are designed to hold leaves, grass, and prunings and will not fall apart when used properly. Set the bags out at the curb before your scheduled collection, and they will be fine. If you have space, consider repurposing an old waste can for yard waste. We have seen cans marked “yard waste” all over the county, and they are great for managing branches and other waste that can be difficult to bag. Check out the [website](#) for more information.

Fairfax Recycles Week!

There is so much recycling going on in Fairfax County these days, we need a whole week to celebrate! We will kick things off on Monday, November 16th from Noon – 1:30pm with a webinar on *How to Recycle Right* featuring opening remarks from Supervisors Pat Herrity and Dan Storck, experts from the plastics recycling industry, and the County’s Solid Waste Management Director for Recycling, Engineering, and Environmental Compliance, Eric Forbes. The webinar will be an opportunity to learn more about plastics and glass recycling, as well as a new pilot program to divert food scraps. To register, visit this [link via the eventbrite web platform](#), or email: recycling@fairfaxcounty.gov for more information.

In addition to Monday’s webinar, Fairfax County is hosting an educational event at the Fairfax County Government Center, and two ribbon-cutting events to launch the new food scrap composting pilot program.

- **Monday, November 16, from 2:30pm-3:30pm @ the I-66 Transfer Station**
Bring your food waste to the new food scrap drop off location at the Transfer Station. We will have a ribbon-cutting event to kick off the new food scrap composting pilot program.
- **Tuesday, November 17, from 10am – 2pm @ Fairfax County Government Center**
Featuring environmental education displays and information, a “touch-a-truck” display, the new purple Glass Monster. Other exhibitors will include the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination, the Clean Fairfax Council, and the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District.
- **On Wednesday, November 18, from 10am – 11am @ the I-95 Landfill Complex**
We will host a second ribbon cutting for the food scrap drop off location at the I-95 landfill complex from 10am – 11am.

These events are open to the public and free of charge. Fairfax County is committed to hosting these events as safely as possible, and we ask all attendees to wear face masks and practice social distancing.

Welcome to Leaf Season

Leaves are changing color and beginning to fall to the ground – so how are you going to handle it? You have a few options, so let’s take a look. One great source of information on all things lawn and garden related is the Virginia Cooperative Extension. They produced a flyer that gives some great suggestions about lawn leaf management. The link is [here](#), but some of the ideas include using a mulching mower

to chop leaves directly back into your lawn. Studies show that this will not negatively impact the grass. According to the Virginia Cooperative Extension, “expanding the use of your rotary or mulching mower into a leaf disposal tool can be highly beneficial in the fall. Mulching leaves directly back to the turf has

Numerous university research reports have detailed how leaf mulching affects turf performance. In almost every instance, the results show that chopping up deciduous leaves as part of a regular mowing schedule is an effective means of managing these leaves without harming the turf.

- Mike Goatley Jr., Extension Turfgrass Specialist, Virginia Tech

proven to be a relatively cost effective and time-saving means of leaf disposal.”

If you’d really rather get those leaves out of your yard and into a compost pile, then you will need to bag your leaves. Most haulers will accept up to 10 bags of leaves at a time, so you may need to pace yourself. It is fairly simple to rake into a compostable paper yard waste bag that is lying on its side. They actually line up very neatly on your curb as they await collection.



Lithium battery disposal



They seem harmless, but lithium batteries can be dangerous, so it is important to manage them correctly. Lithium batteries, in particular, are flammable and have been responsible for fires in trash trucks and at solid waste facilities. Here’s a [battery recycling guide](#) that should help you determine if your battery can go into the trash or if it should be recycled. Battery recycling is free at the Household Hazardous Waste Drop-Off at the I-66 Transfer Station and at the I-95 Landfill Complex.

Glass by the Numbers

Number of purple bins:	36
Pounds of glass collected since March 2019, region-wide:	14,534,000
Pounds of glass collected in 2020* in Fairfax County:	5,502,000
Pounds of crushed glass used for construction projects:	1,126,000
Pounds used for glass-to-glass recycling:	9,821,000
Loads of glass rejected (fails to meet quality standards):	0

In August 2020, with an impending storm approaching, City of Alexandria was in desperate need of sand for sandbags. They used **47 tons** of sand we made from glass.

*to September 15, 2020



Are you looking for a speaker?

The Solid Waste Management Program has a team of outreach specialists that would love to speak to your garden club, HOA meeting, or civic association! Everyone has questions about recycling – and we try to have answers. While your group might not be meeting in person these days, we would be happy to set up a virtual meeting – or join yours. Our speakers are available to share information and answer your questions; contact the outreach team at recycling@fairfaxcounty.gov for more information.

To request this document in an alternate format, call 703-324-5230, TTY 711.



This list (RECYCLINGINFO) is hosted by the government of Fairfax County, VA

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-and-trash>

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