

Salem's "Food Scraps Plus" Pilot  
Frequently Asked Questions, Updated 12/2/15

Compost is picked up on every other Wednesdays and Thursdays (Washington Street/railroad tracks as the dividing line), regardless of your trash and recycling pick up day. If you live on the Peabody/Swampscott side of the tracks your pick-up is Wednesday. If you live on the Marblehead side of the tracks your pick up is Thursday. The compost is picked up by a Black Earth Compost, a different contractor from the trash/recycling hauler (WM). If your compost pick up is the same day as your trash-please separate the compost cart from your trash.

Remaining P/U weeks for compost:

2015:

December 16 and 17

December 30 and 31

2016:

January 13 and 14

January 27 and 28

February 10 and 11

February 24 and 25

March 9 and 10

March 23 and 24

April 2 and 7

April 13 and 14

Compost Pilot will end April 14, 2016. Black Earth Haulers will provide optional private pick up after that date.

NOTE: Always keep compost carts out of the reach of pets. As organic material decomposes, mold can grow; some forms are toxic to pets.

Line your Cart: Please make sure to line your cart with newspaper, paper or compostable bags as this keeps your cart clean and much easier to empty! Very important during the cold months.

**What is the Salem Food Scraps Plus Collection Pilot?** Household organic materials are collected by the resident and picked up curbside by a special truck. Residents receiving municipal trash and recycling collection can participate in this program for free and are given a 12 gallon wheeled cart with locking lid and kitchen countertop container. They also receive free compost. Organics collected are composted instead of incinerated with the trash.

**What are organics?** Organics are materials that break down naturally and can be turned into compost (nutrient rich soil) instead of going in the trash. Examples of organic materials are listed on page 2, under “What is accepted?”

**Why is Salem conducting this pilot organics program?** Organics diversion to composting is one of the major strategies to further reduce our waste. **This 2-year collection pilot (April 15, 2014-April 14, 2016)** will provide us with valuable information to enhance our other diversion efforts (recycling and leaf and yard waste composting).

**Why Compost?** Fewer food scraps in trash means less disposal costs, less transportation, and less incineration/pollution. By composting, we are turning waste into a resource (compost) that we can use again. Collected food waste will go to a nearby farm composting facility and the compost created will be used by the farmers.

**Why is Composting better than putting my food scraps in my garbage disposal?**

Decreased use of garbage disposals means saving water and electricity while also preserving the quality of our waterways. Food scraps are organics which increase Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) at our wastewater treatment plant, adding to the cost of treating our wastewater. By removing these organics, the treatment plant can function more efficiently, saving daily cost of operation while also helping marine wildlife and habitat thus improving our estuaries.

**Who can participate?** Most Salem households receiving municipal trash and recycling collection are eligible.

**What is the cost?** There is no fee for eligible households to participate in this collection pilot program, which ends April 2016.

**What day is pick up?** Wednesday or Thursday, regardless if there is a holiday.

**What time is my pick up?** Carts must be placed curbside by 7am and left until potentially 6pm; there is no regular pick up time. The contractor will continually change the route as additional households are added to increase efficiency.

**How will I store my food scraps?** Through a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) grant, all participants will be provided with a 12-gallon wheeled cart with a locking lid to put your organic waste into for curbside collection, along with a kitchen countertop collection bucket.

**Can I use a different container (inside or outside the house) from what you supply?** It is important that all participants use the supplied green wheeled cart for curbside collection. This is what the collection vendor will be looking for. You can use / purchase your own container for inside the house. If you have excess scraps you may place them in a container next to the green bin, clearly labeled as COMPOST.

**How will the food scraps be collected?** A customized sealed dump truck (allowing for no leakage) will pick up the food waste curbside.

**Is there a limit to the acceptable food scraps that I can put out for collection?** Typically the food scraps should not exceed the capacity of the 12-gallon wheeled cart. If you need additional capacity, or if something happens to your bin, the contractor recommends purchasing the 10 gallon Kingsford Caddies sold at Home Depot and Lowes for approximately \$13. Additionally, a 5 gallon bucket or anything else with a compost label on it (with a compost label from the Engineering Department), and placed right next to the green bin works.

**Where will the collected food scraps be composted?** They will be brought to North Shore farms that are permitted (either by the MassDEP or by the Mass Dept. of Agriculture) to accept food scraps for composting.

**When does the pilot collection start/end?** The program started on Wednesday, April 16, 2014 and is scheduled to continue through April 15, 2016.

**Can I still join the program?** **NO, Per the DEP grant we can't accept new participants after June 30, 2015.**

**What is accepted? (Not to exceed capacity of 12-gallon cart)**

- Raw or cooked meat and seafood, including bones and shells
- Dairy products, eggs and eggshells
- Pasta, bread, grains and cereals
- Fruit and vegetables, including pits and shells
- Cake, cookies, candies including gum
- Coffee grounds with filters and tea bags
- Soup, stews, yogurt
- Cooking oil, grease
- House plants, flowers, floral trimmings
- Hair (human and animal), fur
- Soiled paper (paper towels, napkins, pizza disks) **NO CHEMICALS**
- Waxed cardboard, wax paper (but no cardboard milk & juice cartons)
- Animal bedding (from bird /hamster cages) including waste
- Sawdust, wood chopsticks
- Wine corks (not plastic!)
- Wood stove and fireplace Ash
- Tissues, paper towels, paper napkins (no blood or feces)
- Paper cotton swabs and cotton balls
- Bunny, chicken, hamster pet waste
- Coconut shells
- Nut shells
- Wooden popsicle sticks
- Peanut Shells
- Unused dog and cat food

**What is Not Accepted?**

- Leaves (compost in backyard, put out on curbside collection weeks or bring to Transfer Station at 12 Swampscott Road)
- Branches (bring to Transfer Station at 12 Swampscott Road)
- Plastic bags!!! (line your bin with paper bag, paper towels or newspaper)
- Plastic of any kind including so-called biodegradable plastic
- Cartons-milk, juice, etc.
- Sticks, dirt, pebbles
- Cigarettes
- Dead animals
- Dental floss
- Diapers
- Dog or cat waste
- Cat litter
- Dryer Sheets
- Sanitary products
- Textiles
- Wipes with chemicals (baby or disinfectant)
- Wood

- Any non-compostable take-out containers (ask at point of purchase if containers are compostable)
- Dryer lint
- Paper with Chemicals
- Dog and Cat feces

**How can I minimize odors in my food waste collection cart?**

- Add white vinegar to bottom
- Rinse it out often
- Use a paper bag or newspaper as a liner and sprinkle with baking soda (to absorb wetness & odor)
- Compost napkins, paper towels and other soiled paper
- Wrap meat, fish in newspaper or paper bags
- Freeze food waste before collection
- Use approved compostable bags (see below)-NOTE: biodegradable bags are not acceptable!!
- Clean out any dripped materials
- Stainless steel container (for inside the house) may result in fewer odors

**Can I put my food in plastic bags and then put it in the organics cart?**

No! Plastic bags are a contaminant. You will risk turning an entire load of compostable material into garbage if you use plastic bags. You may use small compostable bags (available at Crosby’s and Whole Foods) to line your container; then tie and deposit into your 12-gallon container. These must be BPI certified (Biodegradable Products Institute) meeting ASTM D6400 standard. Look for this label.

**Should I freeze my compostable material?**

Many residents in other communities chose to keep their food scraps, etc. in the freezer. An easy way to do this is to use the plastic ‘clamshell’ containers that pre-washed salads and baked goods come in. Keep your items frozen in these containers, then pop the frozen food scraps into the compost container on Wednesday or Thursday morning. You can re-use the plastic clamshells. **DO NOT INCLUDE THE PLASTIC IN THE COMPOST CART.**

**Can I use compostable bags?** Only compost facility approved compostable bags that are certified compostable by the BPI (Biodegradable Products Institute) meeting ASTM D6400 standard are acceptable (such as BioBags, Bag to Nature, Veg ware and Natur-Bag). As of March 25, 2014 these bags are available at Crosby’s, Target and Whole Foods.

**What if fruit flies appear?**

Create a countertop fruit fly trap (e.g. small saucer of cider vinegar, or paper cone in narrow bottle containing banana slice or cider vinegar). A tiny drop of dishwashing detergent in the watering can for plants will make plant soil inhospitable.

**Can I leave the paper yard bags out with the cart for pickup? NO**

**Why aren’t leaves accepted? They’re organic.**

The City offers leaf and yard waste collection 6 times annually; the 2015 calendar is included in the Park and Rec booklet mailed to each household in the spring, as well as online at Salem.com. Additionally, you can drop off your leaf and yard waste at the Transfer Station at 12 Swampscott Road during regular business hours. It is open to all residents with proof of residency and a non-commercial vehicle registered in Salem. It is open on Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; Saturday 7:30-11:30. Call to confirm hours around holidays (978-745-0226). Food scraps are very dense and do not need to be compacted. Leaves, on the other hand, tend to be light (when dry) and would quickly fill up the collection truck, which would increase number of trips to compost facility and increase our cost.

**Why aren’t other items included in Acceptable List?** The disposal facility determines what can be included, ensuring a quality finished compost product.

**Can I continue to backyard compost?** Yes, you may continue to backyard compost. At the same time, we also encourage you to participate in the pilot, if eligible. There are some additional items that you can't compost at home that are accepted in the Food Scraps plus Collection Pilot such as meat and fish products and bones.

**How long is the composting process – from time delivered to finished product?** Composting time, start to finish, is usually about a year.

**When and where can I pick up finished compost?** This will be determined in coming months. The City will arrange for periodic deliveries of usable compost to Mack Park; participants in this program can take up to 6 gallons (1/2 of your compost container capacity) annually; you will be responsible for bringing your own containers and shovels.

**What will happen when the pilot is up?**

We hope there is enough interest to support the program and it will be continued.

**How can we protect our carts from theft?**

Please put your address on your cart with a label or marker.

**How can we purchase compost?**

Black Earth Compost is available at Crosby's market on Canal Street in Salem.

If you are moving and no longer need compost, please clean your bin and return to DPS or the Engineering Department.

**Missed pick-up: contact **Conor Miller at [consmiller@gmail.com](mailto:consmiller@gmail.com) or 978-290-4610****

**Additional questions: contact **Julie Rose at [jrose@salem.com](mailto:jrose@salem.com) or 978-619-5679****