

Do a Recycling Inventory

See if you can cut your waste in half this year! Don't think it's possible? You will be surprised how easy it can be!

The new year is a good time to make a resolution to reduce, reuse and recycle. A recycling inventory can help to determine what might be missing in your recycling habits. First, think of your waste basket and garbage can as the destination of last resort - where things go only when there is no other place for them. Much of what is thrown can be recycled or could have been avoided in the first place. Make it easy to recycle by having a blue bin or other recycling container handy in the kitchen. And do what works for you - although it is okay to toss all recyclables into the blue bin it may be easier to gather paper separately or preferable to keep food containers in a covered can.

Now for the inventory:

STEP ONE: WHAT'S IN THE TRASH CAN?

For example:

Packaging materials? Most plastic wrapping like bubble wrap and air pillows can be included in the grocery store plastic bag recycling bin.

Hard plastic packaging? It can go in the blue bin.

Food waste? Start composting veggies and fruits.

Flowers and other organic decorations? Compost them too.

Light bulbs? Compact fluorescents are considered hazardous waste and should be recycled at the county transfer station, Home Depot, Ace Hardware or Mom's Organic Market (Mom's will take all light bulbs!)

Batteries? Rechargeable and button batteries go to the property yard, and Mom's Organic Market will recycle all household batteries.

Styrofoam packaging? Next time look for products that don't use styrofoam packaging. It isn't recyclable through our city program.

Clamshell food boxes? Select food items that aren't packaged in them because they aren't recyclable in our city program.

STEP TWO: WHAT'S IN YOUR BLUE BIN?

For example:

Lots of plastic water bottles? Use reusable bottles for your water on the go.

Individual serving size drink containers? Buy beverages in fewer, larger containers.

Full of newspapers and catalogs? Re-think how much media you can truly read in a week's time and whether there are paper-free alternatives (online newspapers and magazines for example).

Lots of catalogs and junk mail? Sign on to www.catalogchoice.org to take your name off of those company mailing lists whose catalogs you don't want.

You get the idea, making conscious choices is the way to integrate the three Rs into your daily life.

Good Luck !

Katie Baxter-Gagen