

New Compostable Bag Law

for
yard waste
disposal



Residents in Hennepin County—excluding Minneapolis—who bag their yard and organic waste are required to put their waste out for pickup in compostable bags. Acceptable bags include either Kraft (paper) bags or compostable plastic bags. This is due to a new law that went into effect Jan. 1, 2010.



Common questions answered:

When do I have to use a compostable bag?

Compostable bags are required for use with curbside yard waste and compost collection that is bagged. Any yard waste or other compostable material must be placed in a compostable plastic bag or Kraft (paper) bag.

Those who put yard waste directly into yard waste carts for curbside collection or who deliver and dump out their yard waste at a compost site will not be affected. Check with your hauler or city recycling coordinator about the availability of yard waste carts.

Does this affect my regular garbage collection?

This new law only affects yard and organic waste collection, so you can continue to use plastic bags for your garbage collection.

Why is using compostable bags important?

After your yard waste or organic waste is picked up, it is delivered to a compost facility. Plastic bags at composting facilities are problematic because

the plastic must be separated from the waste, which is expensive, and some plastic may still end up in the compost, which decreases the quality of the compost.

Using paper and compostable plastic bags rather than traditional black plastic bags will greatly reduce the amount of plastic being sent to local composting facilities. This will reduce processing costs and enhance the quality of the finished compost.

What are the alternatives to using compostable plastic bags?

If you prefer not to purchase compostable plastic bags, you can contact your city recycling office or yard waste hauler to ask if yard waste carts are available in your area. Other options include using paper Kraft bags, dropping off your yard waste at a compost facility, or composting your yard waste on your property and using the nutrient-rich compost for your garden and lawn.



Look for the logos above for certified compostable plastic. They mean that the bag meets standards required under the law to be considered compostable.

How can I tell if a compostable plastic bag meets the requirements?

Compostable bags are usually clear or tinted a translucent shade of green, white, or pink; however color is not a sure way of determining the compostibility of a plastic bag.

Compostable plastic bags should clearly state that they meet ASTM D6400 standards for composting and that they are marked “compostable.” Bags marked “biodegradable” or “degradable” do not meet the state law.

Where can I buy compostable plastic bags?

Most home improvement, grocery and hardware stores now carry compostable plastic bags. If you don't see them at your local store, ask an employee. Many store owners are just learning of this requirement and may appreciate the customer request.

Compostable bags tend to cost slightly more than the traditional black plastic bags; however, given the new demand, prices may decrease over time.

Will the compostable plastic bags start to breakdown if it rains or if they are stored for a long period of time?

The technology used to make compostable plastic bags has improved greatly in the past few years so they have a longer shelf life and can hold up better to outdoor conditions. The

shelf life of compostable plastic bags is approximately one to three years. Storing compostable plastic bags in a cool, dry place will help them last longer.

Make sure to review the label for the product-specific shelf life and purchase accordingly. You may notice a difference among brands, so if you don't like one type, try another that may work better.

What happens if I do not use a compostable bag?

If you do not use a compostable plastic bag, Kraft bag or a cart from your hauler for yard waste or other compostable waste, your hauler will not collect your waste. If your yard waste is left at the curb for pick-up in a non-compostable plastic bag, they will not collect it. Compost drop-off sites will also require the material to be removed from non-compostable bags and you will be required to take the bag with you.

Why are Minneapolis residents given an extra three years to comply with the new bag law?

Minneapolis residents are given until Jan. 1, 2013, to comply with the new requirements. To reduce bag purchase expenses for its residents, the City of Minneapolis plans on providing yard waste carts to all of its households. Because of the substantial investment required to purchase these carts, the City of Minneapolis was given three years to make the necessary changes to its yard waste collection program.



Hennepin County
Environmental Services
612-348-3777



Your go-to guide for waste & recycling in the Twin Cities.

www.hennepin.us search: yard waste

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