

Can I Recycle Plastic Grocery Bags in the Recycling Bin?

The short answer is NO, soft plastic cannot be recycled in most curbside recycling bins, including in Plymouth and our surrounding communities.



Plastic bags, as common as they are, are still not as widely recycled as other forms of plastic. Typically made of high-density polyethylene or low-density polyethylene (LDPE, number 4 plastic), plastic bags and other soft plastics are difficult to recycle because of their form. Plastic bags are lightweight and can easily get blown to places they don't belong, and because they're thin and flexible, they have a tendency to get snagged or tangled in machinery. Most curbside recycling collection systems and processing equipment are designed to separate rigid materials like cans, bottles, or paper products.

A good reminder: **if the plastic material in question can be wrapped around your finger, it doesn't belong in your recycle bin.**

Sadly, many end up either in landfills or as ugly tree ornaments, urban tumbleweed, or worse, get mistaken as food by marine animals.

While it's best to reduce the amount of plastic bags you use by reusing them or remembering to bring your own reusable bags to the grocery store, you can still recycle plastic bags and keep them out of landfills or the environment. Most large grocery chains, home improvement stores, and retailers like Wal-Mart and Target provide collection bins, usually by the main entrance, for clean and dry soft plastics such as:

- Grocery/carryout bags
- Newspaper delivery bags
- Dry cleaning wraps
- Bread and produce bags
- Zipper food storage bags
- Plastic cereal box liners
- Case wrap/shipping packaging (often found around diapers, snacks, water bottles & paper towels)



Once these plastic bags and wraps are collected and shipped to the proper recycling facilities, they are turned into backyard decking, fences, playground equipment, pipes, pallets, crates, and even new plastic bags.

SOURCES: Plastics Make It Possible, plasticbaglaws.org, American Chemical Society, EPA, plasticfilmrecycling.org