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BROWN COUNTY PORT & RESOURCE RECOVERY DEPARTMENT

The Waste Not

Reflecting on Earth Day 2025

OUR VISION

To provide Brown County municipal commercial and industrial customers cost-effective and sustainable solid waste management systems with the focus on resource recovery primarily through recycling, repurposing and energy recovery

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April 22nd was the 55th Earth Day celebration, when Brown County Resource Recovery reminded residents and businesses of the importance of environmentally responsible waste management. Being an environmentally smart consumer should be a priority 365 days a year, but Earth Day serves as a timely reminder to take action in ways that benefit both the environment and future generations.

"We all have a responsibility to care for the Earth, and that includes how we handle our waste," said Mark Walter, Brown County Resource Recovery Business Development Manager. "By properly taking advantage of our local waste management resources, we can reduce landfill waste, prevent environmental contamination and ultimately contribute to a more sustainable future."

Resource Recovery offers a range of services to support proper waste disposal, including the Hazardous Material Recovery facility, a curbside recycling drop-off site, a Waste Transfer Station, and a landfill for non-recyclable materials. These services provide safe, convenient and environmentally friendly options for residents to responsibly dispose of items ranging from electronics and chemicals to household waste. Here's an overview.

Hazardous Material Recovery Facility: For safe disposal of hazardous items such as electronics, paints and chemicals.

Curbside Recycling Drop-Off: A location for residents to drop off recyclables that don't fit in the curbside bin.

Waste Transfer Station: A convenient location for large-item disposal and other non-recyclable waste.

South Landfill: For drop-off of items that can't be recycled curbside but are still recyclable, and items that cannot be recycled or recovered through other means.

Resource Recovery encourages you to assess your environmental impact and make more sustainable choices year-round. Reduce waste, recycle better and make responsible disposal decisions to keep the planet cleaner and greener for future generations. Resources on how to properly dispose of materials in Brown County can be found at www.browncountyrecycling.org, or via Waste Wizard or the Betterbin mobile app.



First Earth Day Celebration, April 22, 1970, NYC

Photo: NYC Dept. of Records and Information Services



Don't Rely on Recycling Numbers on Plastics

I'm certain you've all seen them before: the little number triangles imprinted on the bottom of plastic containers. They feature numbers one through seven, in a variety of sizes, with a chasing arrows triangle surrounding the number.

One of the most frequently asked questions we get at Brown County Resource Recovery is, "What does each number mean? Which numbers mean the item is recyclable?" Unfortunately, the numbers aren't a clear indication of whether the item is recyclable or not.

The numbers classify types of plastic

Then what's the point of having them? This numerical assignment is called a resin identification code, an indicator of what kind of plastic the object is made out of. This is a way for manufacturers to classify plastics to help recycling plants know how to process the materials.

But the presence of a numbered triangle doesn't necessarily mean that plastic is recyclable. Many of the plastic types aren't recyclable anywhere. Also, recycling capabilities vary from community to community so while a certain type of plastic may be recyclable in one community, it may not be in another.



How2Recycle

Credit: Call2Recycle

The system is changing

The good news is that the system is already changing to a much more user-friendly version. A more easily understandable labelling system called Call2Recycle has been developed to support industry efforts to better educate the public on recycling. These labels spell out if an item can or cannot be recycled, when to check with your local recycler, and when to take the item to a retail drop-off location.

For example, if an item's label states "Check Locally," it may be recyclable in some communities but not in others. If the label says "Store Drop-off," then typically it would be referring to items like plastic bags or wraps that can be recycled after being taken to a retail drop-off location such as Festival Foods.

The label also explains how to prep the item for recycling. So, the label might include the words "Rinse & Insert Lid," which would mean rinse your container out, and then stick the lid back inside the container before recycling. The label could also include the type of material the packaging is made from, such as paper or plastic.

This system would not remove the original numbers from plastic objects, but it can really help clarify recycling instructions to the general public. Many companies have already signed up to use this new labeling system, including P&G, Johnson & Johnson, General Mills and Unilever.

Don't be a Wish-Cycler, When in Doubt, Throw it Out

For items that aren't using this new labelling system, you still shouldn't worry about trying to figure out the recycling numbers on plastic. Don't hope it will get recycled, "When in doubt, throw it out." Hoping that a plastic is recyclable doesn't mean that it will get recycled. In fact, it increases costs to have that item removed from the recyclables.

The best thing you can do is to look to your local community's resources. If you're a resident of Brown County, you can visit the Brown County Resource Recovery website:

www.browncountyrecycling.org. Once there, click on "What Do I Do With?" for a list of recycling instructions for various items, or use the BetterBin app to scan the product to know if it is recyclable in our area.

Time for Spring Cleaning, Start in the Kitchen

Spring is finally here—can you believe it? Whether or not it feels like spring weather, many of us are still feeling that urge to deep clean after a long winter. A great place to start your spring-cleaning efforts is with the kitchen. Of any room, the kitchen is probably the room that will take the longest to clean. Since motivation tends to be highest when you first start a project, you should put that energy to work in the kitchen.

Just keep in mind as you're cleaning, that this is also a great time to get rid of items you no longer need. How you dispose of those items is just as important as how you clean the areas holding them.



Credit: Credit: Antonio Gravante - Fotolia

Refrigerator and freezer: Start by emptying out all of the food, wipe down the shelves and scrub away those food stains you've been ignoring. Baking soda and soapy water are your friends here but be careful not to use water that is too hot since that could cause cracking on cold glass shelving. The other solution is to unplug your fridge and let the shelves get to room temperature before cleaning. Unplugging the freezer will be necessary, or the water will just freeze on contact.

While the shelves are drying, go through your food and throw away anything that has expired. Consider starting your own compost efforts or search for a local option. This could also be a good ongoing option for your unused food. As you put the food you do want to keep back in the fridge and freezer, categorize different groups of food and organize them by what you use the most frequently. Since things tend to get shoved to the back of the refrigerator, try to organize your food by date from right to left.

Cooking appliances: It's likely that your oven, microwave and toaster oven are covered in a fair amount of grease and crumbs. Soapy pads work best on grease. For the microwave, just fill up a cup of water with some lemon, and microwave it for a minute. The lemon water will turn into steam and make cleaning a breeze.

If you have an appliance that just won't get clean or you've been meaning to get rid of, all appliances are accepted at the Brown County Waste Transfer Station. Small Freon containing appliances are accepted at the Brown County Hazardous Material Recovery Facility. Now's the time to clear out that broken toaster and un-cleanable waffle iron.

Cabinets and Countertops: With cabinets, you can again remove all of the food items and toss or compost anything that has expired. A vacuum hose will clear out most of the crumbs. Follow that up with hot soapy water, which can be used to clean both cupboards and countertops. The utensils drawer can usually use some extra TLC. For countertops, the key is to clear off absolutely everything so you can get to the spots that never get cleaned. A multi-purpose cleaner works here as well.

Speaking of cleaners, if you're storing them in an easy-to-access spot, you should move them to a higher shelf, especially if you have young children. Household cleaners are among the top five causes of accidental poisonings. If you're getting rid of cleaning products that you no longer want or need, don't just pour them down the drain. The contents can be harmful to the environment as well. Instead, drop them off at the Brown County Hazardous Material Recovery Facility.

Spring cleaning can give you a real sense of accomplishment, and cleaning the kitchen is a great way to kick that off. Just be sure to Recycle Right as you do it, so you can feel good about your home and the impact you made on the environment.

Washed Ashore, Art to Save the Sea

Washed Ashore: Art to Save the Sea is returning to the Green Bay Botanical Gardens!

Guests of all ages can see and touch nine stunning sea animal sculptures made from trash and debris found in bodies of water while learning more about the effects of plastic pollution. You'll discover the connections between plastic waste, the wellbeing of marine life and learn everyday actions that we can all take to make a difference for the Great Lakes and beyond. The exhibit runs from May 2nd through September 2nd, 2025.

Washed Ashore has traveled to botanical gardens, aquariums, zoos and museums across North America. The Garden is the only venue in Wisconsin to host this traveling exhibit. Keep an eye out for the educational signs detailing facts about each animal, how plastic affects their environment and wellbeing, and everyday actions people can take to make a difference. Other signs throughout the Garden will highlight the Washed Ashore exhibit, how the sculptures are created from marine debris, discover issues related to plastic pollution and how we can help as plastic consumers. For more information about the exhibit, visit gbbg.org/washed-ashore



Photo Credit: Washed Ashore Project www.washedashore.org

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For facts, general information and ideas on how to reduce waste, follow us on Facebook and Twitter! We post information you want to know several times a week.



If you are interested in reading more about a resource recovery topic online or in our newsletter let us know! We would love to hear from you.



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