Best Practices in Food Scrap Collection

Setting up a Collection Program
Starting a Food Scrap Collection Program

Step 1: Receiving Your Food Scrap Carts(s)
You will be notified when Davis Waste Removal (DWR) will deliver the food scrap carts. Please move the carts to a secure area. There are two main places to store your carts:

1. Trash/recycling enclosures, as long as your business does not share an enclosure with another business. If there is no room for a food scrap cart in your enclosure, DWR may be able to help you choose a location that is accessible to the collection vehicles.

2. A secure area accessible only to your employees (in warehouse, storage area, etc.). On collection day the food scrap cart(s) need to be rolled out to a designated collection location so they can be serviced by DWR.

For the sake of data collection and contamination reduction, food scrap carts may not be shared with other businesses.

Step 2: Setting up Compost Collection Bins
To make it easy for your staff to collect food scraps for composting, you might want to consider purchasing green, brown or yellow bins that are easily identifiable and are visually distinct from trash or recycling containers. These compost collection bins should be placed in locations where food scraps and other compostable materials are handled and discarded. This should include areas such as kitchen prep stations and sink/dish washing stations so plates can be scraped before they are washed. Please do not place compost collection bins in any customer-accessible areas (dining areas or retail floor). While your staff may become experts in what can and cannot go into the compost bins, your customers may not be. Contamination from non-organic materials can ruin the composting process and may cause your food scrap carts to be emptied as trash.

To ensure success, place easy-to-read labels on all waste collection bins. Your staff should be able to tell at a glance which bins are for paper, food scraps, plastic bottles and trash. You may need to have some labels translated so that it is more convenient for your staff. Posters are also very helpful as a quick reference and can be placed on or above the collection bins. Posters are available online at DavisRecycling.org.

Step 3: Staff Training
Training your staff is the most important step in the process because the success of your food scrap collection program depends on your staff’s understanding of what is and is not acceptable to place in the food scrap cart. Include specific training on separating recycling and food scraps in new employee training and have reminders at regular staff meetings. Let your staff know how you are doing in your diversion efforts—how much less trash you produce. The City’s website has posters, bin labels and an online training video to help your staff.

Definitions

**Food scraps** (fūd ’skrap): Food preparation wastes and uneaten food. *Examples: leftovers, outdated bread, wilted lettuce, vegetable peels, and fruit pits.*

**Compost** (käm-’pōst): 1: A soil amendment made from decayed organic matter. 2: The Process of turning organic matter into a soil amendment 3: Materials that are derived from living organisms.

**Organics** (ȯr-’gan-ik): Materials that are derived from living organisms. *Examples: food scraps, paper and cardboard.*
What Can Be Placed in the Food Scrap Cart?
Acceptable items in the food scrap carts include fruit, vegetables, pasta, bread, rice, meat, coffee grinds & filters, tea bags, paper plates, paper towels, paper napkins and other food-soiled paper. No dairy products, plastic bags, polystyrene take-out containers and other plastic and non-organic material.

Keeping your Compost Collection Bins Clean
To minimize the amount of mess left in the compost bins, you may want to consider lining the bin with a bag. There are a few options available:

Using Compostable Bags
You may use compostable bags for food-scrap collection. Compostable bags currently cost more than regular polyethylene-based bags, so be prepared to spend more money if this is your choice. The bag and its contents can be emptied together into the food scrap cart. Please purchase bags that are color-coded or labeled as compostable so that they are easily identifiable and not mistaken for regular plastic.

Paper Bags
If you can find paper bags large enough to line your compost collection bin, this may be a easy way to keep your container clean. Paper bags can be placed in the food scrap cart.

TIP: Employees should be warned not to try to lift compostable or paper bags out of the compost collection bin. These bags may break if filled with large amounts of moist, heavy food. Instead, the liner should be tied off securely, and the entire contents of the bin, liner and all, dumped into the food scrap cart.

Plastic Bags
If you choose to line your compost collection bin with plastic bags, please note that when the bins are dumped into the food scrap cart, the plastic bag MUST be removed from the food scraps. PLASTIC BAGS ARE PROHIBITED IN FOOD SCRAP CARTS. A cart of food scraps that contains plastic may be rejected and sent to landfill instead. Make sure that your staff is aware that the plastic bags CANNOT be put in the food scrap cart.

Cleaning the Food Scrap Carts and Collection Bins
Food scrap carts and collection bins will need to be cleaned occasionally to help prevent potential odor and pest problems. Create a designated bin washing station and procedure, and rinse collection bins as needed. Be sure that rinse water drains to the sanitary sewer. Do NOT allow rinse water to drain into the street or into storm drains.

Here are some ideas for keeping your cart cleaner:
- Try to avoid dumping liquids into the food scrap cart.
- Use compostable or paper bags to line collection containers and tie off the bags before placing them in the cart.
- If you are using compostable or paper bags to line your collection bins, empty the bins into the food scrap cart when they are 40%-70% full. This will prevent the bag from breaking and leaking.
- Staff may wish to wipe out carts as needed to remove remaining residues.

TIP: Place some newspaper or a piece of cardboard at the bottom of the compost collection bin and Food Scrap Cart bin to help prevent the food scraps from sticking to the bottom.
Contamination Policy
When the food scrap carts are picked up by DWR, they must contain 100% organic material ONLY. The materials are not sorted prior to composting, so non-organics in your food scrap cart will contaminate the compost. Contamination jeopardizes the Food Scrap Collection program. If DWR finds unacceptable material in your food scrap cart when it is being picked up, the cart may be emptied as trash instead. You will receive notification that your food scrap cart was contaminated and a staff member will contact you and provide resources to ensure that only organics are placed in the food scrap cart.

If your carts are repeatedly contaminated with non-organics, your food scrap cart will be removed and will be given to the next business on the waiting list. Should you wish to try food scrap collection again, you will have to re-apply and you will be put on the waiting list.

Health Concerns and Regulations
Food scraps are already in your trash and they are subject to the same health regulations as trash. Participants in the Commercial Organics Collection Pilot Program use 65 gallon carts provided by Davis Waste Removal (DWR) for collection – just like regular trash service in Davis. The food scraps carts are collected twice a week, just like trash. There is no difference except that the food scraps are placed in their own cart separate from trash.

Ask the Experts
Please feel free to contact the Recycling Program staff at PWWeb@CityofDavis.org or 757-5686 for help in setting up a food scrap collection program. They can help you set up your program for success.