

A little Bit of History

The discovery of glass dates back more than 5,000 years. In the First Century BC, the Egyptians developed a way to hand-blow glass bottles, with others continuing to make it that way for almost 2,000 years. During the last 100 years, mechanised glass-blowing techniques have revolutionised the production of glass containers, allowing bottles to be produced quickly and cheaply and creating more waste! Today, glass containers are widely used to package a huge array of foods and drinks.

Tips for Householders

- Glass can and should be recycled by placing in the yellow-topped recycling bin that is collected fortnightly for residents.
- Bulk or excess glass items can be brought to Whytes Gully or Helensburgh Waste Disposal Depots - free of charge.

What Glass can be Recycled?

- All clear, green and amber glass bottles.
- All glass jars.

How to Prepare Glass for Recycling

- Remove lids or caps.
- Rinse bottles last after doing the washing up.

Which Glass cannot be Recycled?

- Broken window glass and broken windscreen glass.
- Heat-treated glass, eg Corning Ware, Pyrex or Vision Ware.
- Light globes or mirrors.
- White opaque bottles.
- Laboratory and medical glass.
- China and ceramics.

How can I Reuse Glass?

- Reuse containers to store milk and sugar when going on picnics.
- Reuse wine bottles to chill water in the fridge.
- Decorated glass jars and bottles can be used for vases

No Room in your Yellow-Topped Recycling Bin?

There is no limit to the number of recycling bins you can have at home. For a small additional annual fee, you can get an extra bin for a fortnightly collection. Just call Council on 02 4227 7111 for details.

Don't forget that clean glass, paper and cardboard, scrap metal and plastics can be dropped off free of charge at Wollongong Council's waste depots. This might be helpful if you have more recycling than can fit in your yellow bin.

Alternatively, why not ask your neighbour to see whether they have spare room in their recycling bin and offer to return the favour.

Glass Recycling

Glass can be recycled forever. The same glass can be recycled a million times over to produce bottles and jars of the same high quality every time.

However, to keep producing the best end product the recycled materials must be a high quality. Minute amounts of some materials mixed in with the glass for recycling can cause contamination. Contamination of as little as five grams per tonne (equivalent to a 10 cent coin) can result in valuable glass going to landfill.

Positive Environmental Benefits of Recycling Glass

- Saves natural resources such as sand, soda ash and limestone.
- Saves energy - recycled glass melts at a lower temperature than raw materials.
- Reduces emissions; there are no by-products, air emissions are reduced and no waste is generated.

How does Recycling Glass Save Energy?

The glass recycling process produces a crushed-glass product called 'cullet'. Cullet is often mixed with virgin glass materials to produce new products.

Making new glass from recycled cullet saves energy because recycled glass melts at a lower temperature than virgin raw materials. Because the materials do not need to be heated as much, less energy is required in the manufacturing process.

How much Glass does Wollongong Recycle?

In 2008, glass (green, brown and clear) was the second largest component in resident recycling, representing 37.5% composition (by weight) of an average 240L residential yellow-top recycling bin*. Paper was the largest. Glass can only be recycled if placed in the yellow-top recycling bin. In an average Wollongong resident's red-top garbage bin, there is still approximately 4%* glass that could get recycled. This will go to landfill, and be buried forever!

Separated clear, brown and green bottles are sent to Visy's glass manufacturing plant at Port Botany. Since February 2009 the mixed-colour smashed glass bottles are sent to Moorebank's Glass Granulates, a joint venture between Benedicts and Visy. This waste glass is crushed into fine particles for use as a sand-substitute for sandblasting, water filtration, aggregates, bricks and tiles production.

Maybe you can encourage your neighbours and friends to sort out their rubbish and help reduce the amount of recyclables that still end up in our landfill.

Sources:

- *Data from the Wollongong City Council Waste Audit report, 2008, conducted by APC Environmental Management
- Visy Recycling website www.visyrecycling.com.au;
- Glass Granulates website <http://www.glassgranulates.com.au/>
- Clean up Australia website- Fact Sheet Glass 2010
www.cleanup.org.au/PDF/au/cua_glass_recycling_factsheet_final.pdf;
- ACT NOWaste www.tams.act.gov.au/live/Recycling_and_Waste

Disclaimers

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