

'ECO-PLASTICS' INFORMATION SHEET

 Norfolk recycles



COMPOSTABLE PLASTICS

Compostable plastics are generally made from plant-based materials like corn or potato starch or cellulose, rather than fossil fuels or petrochemicals as with traditional plastics. Although the fact that they are produced from renewable resources is a real plus point, if not correctly disposed of they can still cause damage to our oceans and environment.

Compostable plastics can't go in with your plastic recycling as they can't be recycled in the same way. They are designed to break down in very specific composting conditions rather than be recycled.

Those labelled as 'home compostable' can go in your home compost bin but will probably take a long time to break down. Anything labelled as 'industrial compostable' would unfortunately need to be placed in your residual waste bin. Although the contents of the brown garden waste bins is taken to an industrial composting facility, the technology can't tell the difference between compostable plastics and conventional plastics so all will be removed as contamination. Too much plastic (compostable or otherwise) could even cause a load to be rejected completely.

BIODEGRADABLE PLASTICS

If something is truly biodegradable then, given the right conditions and the presence of micro-organisms, bacteria or fungi, it will break down into natural components without leaving behind any harmful substances or toxins. Unfortunately, however, many items labelled as being 'biodegradable' do not break down in this way, but instead leave behind chemicals or other harmful substances.

Bioplastics - including biodegradable and bio-based plastics - are made fully or partially made from biological (plant based) materials, however this does not necessarily mean they are biodegradable and will break down in a natural way. Nearly half of the bioplastics produced are not actually biodegradable.

OXO DEGRADABLE PLASTICS

Oxo degradable and photo degradable plastics are conventional plastic mixed with an additive to help them to break down. In the presence of oxygen and sunlight, they quickly fragment into smaller and smaller pieces (microplastics) but don't break down into natural components. Instead, the resulting microplastics are left contaminating the environment indefinitely.