

City of Ann Arbor Compostable Cart Pilot Fact Sheet

Fall 2006-2007

Program Summary

The City of Ann Arbor is piloting the use of 96-gallon semi-automated “Compostable” carts in a 250-household neighborhood. Participants will also be able to add fruit and vegetable produce waste, such as banana peels and corncobs to the carts. The pilot:

- Offers a convenient yard waste cart for residents to roll around the yard as they collect debris. Eliminates the need to purchase paper yard waste bags, which tear when wet.
- Pilots the addition of vegetative food waste to the yard waste processed at the City’s municipal Compost Center to reduce landfill fees and recycle more waste.
- Tests the potential collection efficiencies, cost savings, and worker safety benefits of using carts.
- Provides a uniform waste storage and collection program for residents and continues to improve the City’s street appearance on trash pickup days.

Question & Answers

Q1: What can I put into the Compostable cart?

A: Please put yard wastes, brush, and uncooked fruits and vegetable scraps into the Compostable cart. See the attached chart for more specifics.

Q2: Why can’t I include food scraps, such as meat, fish, bones, milk products, and cooking oils in the Compostable cart?

A: Adding meat, fish, dairy, and oils to an outdoor composting operation runs the risk of creating odors or attracting vermin. To handle meat products, a different composting strategy would be required, such as building an enclosed “bio-reactor” or a large-scale worm farm. Ann Arbor does not have this capacity at this time. A larger compost program may be considered in the future.

Q3: Can I put paper yard waste bags or bundled brush outside my Compostable cart?

A: No. All Compostable materials must go into the cart. This is critical. The pilot is to test automating the Compostable collection. However, you may put paper bags with Compostable materials inside the cart. Fall street leaf pickups will be provided for the leaf season.

Q4: Can I ever use the Compostable cart for trash?

A: No. The Compostable carts have a special color and imprint to keep them separate from the blue A2 trash carts. Please store any surplus “dry” materials for the next week’s collection. (Some neighbors may be willing to share surplus storage space in their carts.)

Q5: How do I place the Compostable cart at the curb for pickups?

A: The same rules apply to the Compostable cart as for the A2 carts. Please place the cart at the curb before 7 a.m. on your weekly collection day (Friday). Allow at least 3’ between the Compostable cart and the A2 Cart and other obstacles, such as utility poles, trees, vehicles, and recycling bins. This space allows the automated truck arms to grasp the carts without tipping other containers. The cart’s serial number should face the street (handle facing the sidewalk) and the lid closed.

Q6: I have a big yard, and don't know if one 96-gallon cart is big enough.

A: Pilot participants may purchase an additional 96-gallon cart for \$45. Please call the Customer Service Center at (734) 994-2807 to arrange for pre-payment before delivery. Please save extra materials for the next week. Do not leave bundled brush or paper bags of yard waste outside of the Compost cart. Your fall street leaf collection will be provided as scheduled.

Q7: May I keep the Compostable cart after the pilot period?

A: Yes! The city is committed to providing Compostable cart service to the pilot area, whether or not some variation of the program is expanded to other areas.

Q8: Why are grass clippings accepted in the Compostable cart pilot, even though they were dropped a few years ago from the general Compostable collection program?

A: It is still accurate that grass clippings are best "grasscycled" back into the lawn with a mulching mower to save time in bagging the clippings and to provide nitrogen to the turf. Grasscycling is the recommended practice for maintaining lawns at most golf courses, which have a high standard of appearance and maintenance. Grass clippings can also be mixed with brown leaves within a home compost bin. But city field workers are aware that some residents would like to have their grass clippings picked up, even just a few times a year. With the automated cart removing the biggest difficulty of heavy grass clippings either being overweight in cans or breaking through paper bags, the option is available for pilot participants to use the carts for grass clippings, if desired.

Q9: Right now I put my produce scraps in a plastic bag inside my trash cart. How do I keep my Compostable cart clean if I'm adding loose produce, such as wet melon rinds?

A: The cart can be cleaned with soap and hose water. If desired, you may put your produce into paper bags or wrap in sheets of newspaper before placing into the Compostable cart. (Plastic bags are not acceptable in the Compostable collection program.)

Q10: Do I have to put produce waste in the Compostable cart? I put all my food waste down the trash disposal and don't want to bother with another option.

A: You may continue to handle your produce waste as you prefer. Of course, we would like to have more materials added to the pilot carts. But a big part of the pilot is to find out what works best for participants. Some people use their produce scraps for their home compost bin. Please give us your preferences and insights on the survey!

Q11: What can I do with my old Compost cans?

A: Trashcans in good shape are useful to store gardening supplies, birdseed, or sports equipment in your garage. You may know friends outside of the pilot area who are able to use the cans for their Compostables. Or you may recycle metal cans at the Drop-Off Station, 2950 E. Ellsworth, open Mon-Sat, 9-5. You may put unwanted 33-gallon plastic trashcans into the 64/96-gallon refuse carts to discard as trash.

Q12: Is using a Compostable cart for yard waste and produce waste a new idea?

A: This pilot is innovative but not unique. When the city's yard waste collection program began in 1988, it was given the broader "Compostable" name so that it could expand. Communities such as San Francisco and Toronto use three carts separated into: recyclables, organics, and trash for collecting materials.

For Additional Information on the Compostable Cart Pilot program, please contact (734) 994-2807, recycle@a2gov.org, or www.a2gov.org/recycle Thank you!

*The pilot will end Friday, Dec. 1, 2006 and resume on Apr. 1, 2007 with the return of the growing season.
Printed on Recycled Paper, August 2006.*