



## How Long Does it Take for Garbage to Decompose?

From a sustainability perspective, answering the question of how long it takes various types of garbage to decompose is important. In fact, we should reduce consumption of products that generate waste materials that take a long time in landfills to get completely decomposed.

As William L. Rathje and Cullen Murphy note in *Rubbish! The Archeology of Garbage*, misconceptions about the role of landfills in decomposition are often profound.

“There is a popular notion that in its depths, the typical municipal landfill is a locus of roiling fermentation, of intense chemical and biological activity,” the authors observe. “The truth is, however, that the dynamics of a modern landfill are very nearly the opposite of what most people think. Biologically and chemically, a landfill is a much more static structure than is commonly supposed.”

Let’s see how long it really takes for various wastes to decompose in landfills (based on waste category) with some relevant statistics. It should be noted that the rate of decomposition can depend upon landfill conditions.

**Disposable Diapers** - Just in the United States alone, every year more than 18 billion disposable diapers are thrown away. These disposable diapers take approximately 250-500 years to decompose in landfills, thus underscoring the efforts of programs offering diaper and absorbent hygiene product recycling.

**Aluminum Cans** - Every minute, every day, more than 120,000 aluminum cans are recycled only in America. But, at the same time, in every three-month period, enough aluminum cans are thrown away in America that can rebuild the entire American commercial air fleet. Aluminum cans take 80-200 years in landfills to get completely decomposed.

**Glass** - Normally glass is very easy to recycle mainly for the fact that glass is made of sand. Simply breaking down glass and melting it, we can produce new glass. But the shocking fact is that if glass is thrown away in landfills, it takes million years to decompose. And according to some sources, it doesn’t decompose at all.

**Paper Waste** - Based on volume, paper the largest element in American landfills. Normally, it takes 2-6 weeks in landfills to get completely decomposed. But if we recycle paper items, we can easily save lot of landfill space, while reducing the energy and virgin material requirements of making non-recycled paper.

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### We want our service to be the best, and you can help

Please place your cart at the curb edge with **at least 3 feet of clearance** from other objects, including other carts, basketball hoops and motor vehicles. Make sure your cart lid is down completely. Thank you for helping us provide you with the best possible service. Together we can keep our neighborhoods safe and clean.

**Please, no dirt, rocks, batteries, fluorescent lights, sharps or overloading - lids must be closed to prevent spills.**



**Recycling Cart Acceptable List** Paper, cardboard, aluminum containers and foil, steel or tin cans, glass bottles and jars, plastic bottles and tubs (such as yogurt, margarine and cottage cheese, numbers ♻️ through ♻️).

**Recycling Cart Non-Acceptable List** Waxed paper containers, plastic bags, foam packaging, paper towels & napkins, food soiled paper & cardboard, aerosol cans and diapers.

**Greenwaste Cart Acceptable List** Grass and weed clippings, shrubs and tree prunings (less than 4” in diameter), leaves, plants and flowers, food scraps and food soiled paper products.

**Greenwaste Cart Non-Acceptable List** No household garbage, no plastic bags, **no dirt or rocks**, no overloading - lid must be closed to prevent spills.

# How Long Does it Take for Garbage to Decompose?

**Food Waste** - By weight, food waste is the largest waste item in American landfills. The time taken for food waste decomposing depends on the type of food. Normally, an orange peel takes 6 months but an apple core or a banana peel takes around one month to decompose.

**Plastic Waste** - Plastic bags are one of the most common litter items found in our waterways, and plastic pollution is a growing threat to oceans and marine life. Plastic bags take hundreds of years to break down or decompose, causing a cumulative litter problem. Shopping with reusable bags helps reduce litter and waste, protects creeks and the bay, and conserves natural resources.

Thank you for doing your part!

**Final Note** - The increasing waste volume are a major concern for mankind. So, the best way to deal with this problem is avoiding products that generate waste materials that take more than a year to decompose in landfills through a proactive design for recycling.

Source: [www.thebalance.com](http://www.thebalance.com)

## New Plastic Bag Ordinance for Alameda County

Since 2013, certain retail stores, including grocery, liquor, and convenience stores have been prohibited from distributing single-use plastic bags.

As of May 1, 2017, the law has expanded to include all retail stores that sell perishable or nonperishable goods including, but not limited to, clothing, food, and personal items. Stores covered since 2013 remain affected.

Requirements for retail stores: stop providing single use carryout bags, stock compliant reusable and paper bags at checkout, charge a minimum of 10 cents for compliant bags and itemize the 10 cent charge on customer receipts.

## SUMMERTIME FIRE SAFETY TIPS



**CAN  
STOP  
TRASH  
CART  
FIRES**



Setting up your grill with charcoals and grilling all your favorite foods is a great part of summer barbecues. Please, be very careful when disposing your burnt charcoal, because it can be very deceiving. Although the ashes can seem gray and cold, a little ember can be hidden inside and last for days which will cause a fire. A fail-safe idea is scoop your ashes into tin foil and add a little water. If you hear a sizzling noise, that is the little ember we were telling you about.



The next sort of trash cart fire can be caused by accidentally disposing of "Household Hazardous Waste" in your trash cart. Some chemicals can be inert on their own, but when mixed with others they can create a chemical reaction that causes heat which starts a fire. Therefore, state law demands that all chemicals must be taken to your local Hazardous Waste Facility and not be put in your trash cart.

We give you these two very important tips because we don't want you to have a melted trash cart, but most importantly, we do not want a burning trash cart to spread to your home endangering you or your family. Have a safe and happy summer.

PLEASE DETACH HERE AND RETURN THIS PORTION WITH YOUR PAYMENT.



Pleasanton  
Garbage  
Service Inc.  
P.O. Box 399  
Pleasanton, CA  
94566

One stamp will be given for each 25 lbs. of recyclable material presented at the Buy Back Center. A total of 75 lbs. (3 stamps) of recyclable material must be presented during any given quarter to receive a credit. If you have an automated 96 gallon service, your quarterly credit will be \$3.51. If you have an automated 35 gallon service, your quarterly credit will be \$2.22.

To ensure proper credit, please fill out the information below:

Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Service Address: \_\_\_\_\_