

Trash Talk!



THURSTON COUNTY
WASHINGTON

Public Works

Fall 2023



Thurston County Studies, Too

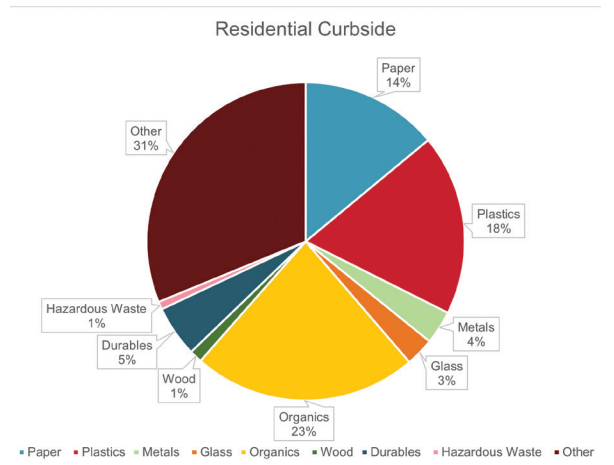


In May 2023, we finished a year-long “waste characterization” study that showed us what kinds of materials Thurston County residents and businesses put in the garbage. Several times throughout the year, workers spent an entire week hand-sorting loads of garbage from neighborhoods all across Thurston County. They

separated the materials into 42 categories to learn what we’re throwing in the garbage instead of recycling or composting. The study found that organic waste (food and yard waste) makes up 23% of our garbage. This is more than any other single category. Each of us can help reduce the amount of organic waste sent to the landfill (and the greenhouse gases that form when it decomposes) by taking steps to prevent food waste in the first place. Some ways to do this include:

- Shopping with a list so we only buy what we need
- Planning meals so we don’t cook extra food
- Storing food properly so it doesn’t spoil

We can compost at home or sign up for curbside collection for yard waste and food that can’t be eaten.



If you, your class, or the adults at home want to learn more about what we studied, scan the QR code to read our final report.



Thank You, Pleasant Glade Elementary

Students at Pleasant Glade Elementary School in Lacey started collecting food scraps from fourth and fifth grade lunches in December 2022. Since then, Mr. Landers and fifth grade students in the leadership program have shown other students how to sort their lunch waste correctly. They also tracked how much food and recyclables were kept separate from the garbage and out of the landfill. Here are their results:

- Composted 2,737 pounds of food scraps.
- Saved 1,200 pounds of edible food by sharing it with others.
- Recycled over 14,680 paper bags that were used for breakfast.
- Decreased the amount of single-use plastic utensils by switching to reusable utensils.

We want to thank Mr. Landers and the students of Pleasant Glade for their great work. We plan to continue supporting these efforts at Pleasant Glade Elementary while helping other schools reduce their waste. Schools interested in assistance should email us at SolidWasteYouth@co.thurston.wa.us.



A Scrambled Mess

Instructions: Jax and Izabella want to learn how to compost. But they need your help because some of these words are scrambled. Unscramble the words in bold and use them to complete the sentences.

- Composting turns _____ clippings, food scraps, and other _____ materials into a dark, rich product that makes gardens grow better.
nalw **cionagr**
- Try composting yard _____ in a corner of the yard or in a _____ bin.
terilasma **postomc**
- Layer wet materials, like weeds, _____, and lawn clippings, with dry materials, like small twigs, bits of _____, and dead leaves.
spltan **repap**
- Spray the compost heap with a sprinkler occasionally to keep it _____. Stir it with a shovel or pitchfork once a _____.
soitm **kewe**
- Over time (usually two to four months), the _____ will _____ and become compost.
smaterlai **kreab** **nowd**
- Kitchen _____ can also be added to the _____ heap.
prassc **pocostm**

Garden Gold

As the vibrant greens of summer give way to the golden shades of fall, it's time to prepare lawns and gardens for the seasonal change. Those dying leaves can become compost or mulch, preparing your yard for a cozy winter and a fruitful spring. Here are some tips to turn the red, orange, and yellow leaves into garden gold:

- After gathering the leaves, put them into your compost bin. Mix them in slowly over the next several months with additional "green" debris, such as fruit and vegetable scraps.
- Use your mower with the bagger attached to shred and pick up the leaves. These leaf bits can be used as mulch. Leaf mulch in your flower beds and gardens protects the soil and helpful creatures living in it from harsh winter temperatures.
- If there is only a sprinkling of leaves on your lawn, use your mower instead of a rake. The mower will shred the leaves into small pieces and drop them back onto the lawn. If the leaf parts are too big, go over the lawn with the mower a second time. Small, shredded bits protect your grass during the winter and decompose by spring.

You may have heard older folks talk fondly about the "smell of burning leaves." That may sound like a nice memory, but we now know that burning leaves is dangerous. Burn-

ing leaves also releases greenhouse gases and pollutants into our air. This can cause serious health problems. Young children and people with allergies and breathing difficulties are at the highest risk. Because of this, burning leaves is illegal in many communities.

If you just can't resist raking leaves and playing in the leaf piles, you should know what to do with them when you're done. Lots of people in Thurston County have a special home bin for food and yard waste. This bin gets picked up at the curb, just like garbage and recycling. Food and yard waste can also be dropped off at the Waste and Recovery Center (WARC) near Lacey. The WARC is open Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. The food and yard waste you drop off are made into compost at Brady Trucking near Shelton, Washington. People buy this compost to put in their gardens. That's one more great benefit of leaves!



Credit: Delfinkina | iStock | Getty Images Plus

Composting Questions?

Our Master Recycler Composter Program Can Help!



The Thurston County Master Recycler Composter Program offers free monthly composting workshops from April through October. These workshops are held in person at a compost demonstration site or virtually on Zoom. Topics include an introduction to home composting,

food and yard waste composting, and worm composting.

The Master Recycler Composter Program also offers downloadable instructions for people who want to start composting at home and information about different types of composting and equipment. This helps you set up the best compost system for your situation.

You can even send questions about home composting, gardening, or recycling to a special email address and volunteers will try to help. For more information, visit [Extension.wsu.edu/thurston/gardening/composting](https://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/gardening/composting).

Help Us Rename Trash Talk!



We have a popular video series called "Talkin' Trash," so we're holding a contest to rename this newsletter. All fourth and fifth grade students in Thurston County are invited to enter the contest and suggest a new name between October 1 and November 14. The



winner and one runner-up will win prizes. For the entry form, scan the QR code here or visit thurstoncountywa.gov/departments/public-works/solid-waste/education-resources/schools-youth.



Inspect to Detect



Credit: Oleh Veres | iStock | Getty Images Plus

Reading can be a mystery. Some words are spelled the same but mean different things. You need to think like a detective looking for clues and read the entire sentence to figure out the correct meanings for these words.

Instructions: Heteronyms are words that are spelled the same, have different meanings, and are pronounced differently. They can make reading out loud very tricky. Fill in the blanks with the correct heteronym pair for each sentence. The first sentence has been done for you as an example.

~~content~~ read close produce
windy separate present

1. I am content with the content I've written for my paper about going green.
2. I'd like to _____ you with a birthday _____ wrapped in a reused gift bag.
3. Noah will _____ the same composting book that his older brother _____ last year.
4. _____ the recycling into _____ containers for plastics, metals, and papers.
5. I biked down the _____ road to the recycling center on a _____ day.
6. If I care for my garden, it will _____ the most delicious _____ for my family to eat.
7. The composting bin is _____ to the back door, so be sure to _____ the lid to reduce the smell.

Bonus:
Write a sentence using the heteronyms tear (ripping paper or cloth) and tear (a drop of liquid from a crying eye).



Take It to HazoHouse

You may not know it, but you could have dangerous chemicals tucked away in your home. Household hazardous waste, or HHW, can come in many forms. Unneeded fertilizers, insecticides, paints, antifreeze, and cleaning products are all examples of HHW. We don't use most of these items very often, so they may be shoved to the back of a cabinet or closet and forgotten. It's important to dispose of these chemicals properly when they are no longer needed because they can cause a lot of harm to humans, wildlife, and our environment.

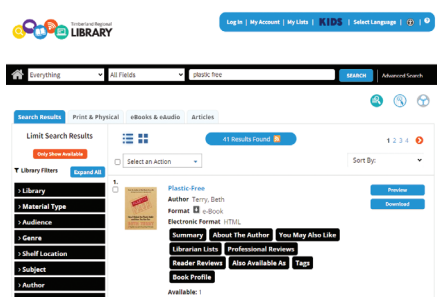
Take a day together with an adult where you live to go through your closets and cabinets to look for HHW. Then, you can dispose of unwanted materials safely at HazoHouse at the Waste and Recovery Center, which is open seven days a week all year long to accept HHW. HazoHouse accepts materials from residents at no charge, but businesses are charged a fee.

Learn With Us!



Our Plastics in the Ocean Kit will show you and your classmates how plastics pollution impacts birds and other ocean life. As you work on the activities, you can talk about ways to reduce the volume of plastics ending up in the ocean and discuss what actions you can take to make a positive difference. Teachers can ask to borrow this kit by emailing SolidWasteYouth@co.thurston.wa.us.

Students can borrow books and



videos about waste, recycling, and composting from their local branch of the Timberland Regional Library. Some of these are e-books, making it easy to get books instantly without leaving home. The interlibrary loan program even allows you to borrow books from other libraries if your regular library doesn't have them. Library cards are free and available to kids of all ages. For more information, visit Trl.org.

Clean-up, Drop-off in Tumwater

The City of Tumwater will host the Clean-up, Drop-off event for residents on Saturday, October 7, from 9 a.m. to noon, in the City Hall Parking Lot. If you live in Tumwater, visit Ci.tumwater.wa.us/residents/clean-up-drop-off-2023 for more information.



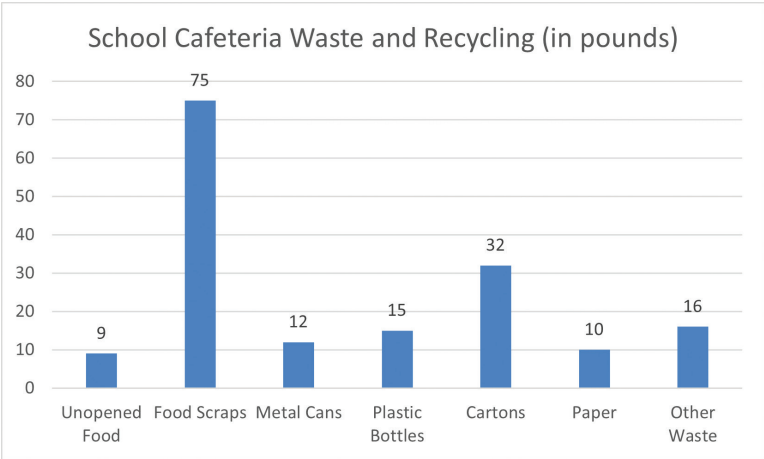
Grasping Graphs



Credit: GoodLifeStudio | E+ | Getty Images

Instructions: Graphs are a really easy way to look at data (information). A bar graph uses bars of different heights to compare amounts.

Students in Miss Garcia's class wondered how much of their school lunches could be recycled or composted so they did an experiment. They collected all the garbage and recycling from their cafeteria for one day, weighed it, and placed the information in the chart below.



Use the information from the bar graph to answer these questions:

1. What is the title of the bar graph? _____
2. How are the results reported? _____
3. What category had the least amount of waste? _____
4. What category had the most amount of waste? _____
5. How many pounds of cartons were collected? _____
6. Were more metal cans or plastic bottles collected? _____
7. How much total waste and recycling was collected? _____

Bonus:

What sorts of items might be included in the category "other waste"?

What could students do to reduce the amount of waste that needs to be landfilled?

What items can you recycle and/or compost at your school?

Law Aims to Reduce Plastics Pollution

As of June 1, 2023, Washington State has banned companies from making Styrofoam packing peanuts or distributing them in our state. This is one part of a bigger law passed in 2021 meant to help reduce plastics pollution. Other parts of the law include requirements for recycled content in plastic packaging, a ban on businesses automatically including certain single-use plastic items with food orders, and a ban on additional Styrofoam products beginning in 2024. To learn more about this law, visit [Ecology.wa.gov/Waste-Toxics/Reducing-recycling-waste/Waste-reduction-programs/Plastics/2021-plastic-pollution-laws](https://ecology.wa.gov/Waste-Toxics/Reducing-recycling-waste/Waste-reduction-programs/Plastics/2021-plastic-pollution-laws).

Plan Ahead for a Green Halloween

Now that back-to-school shopping is over, Halloween costumes and decorations have come out at stores. This is the perfect time for some ghoulish fun while being kind to our planet. Make Halloween extra special this year by reducing, reusing, and recycling. Here are some tips for a green Halloween:

- Instead of buying a brand-new costume, try creating one using items you already have at home. Raid your closet or shop at thrift stores. Not only will your family save money, but you will also have fun making a one-of-a-kind costume.
- Have a jack-o'-lantern and eat it, too! After carving your masterpiece jack-o'-lantern, toast the pumpkin seeds for a delicious snack and



Credit: mediaphotos | iStock | Getty Images Plus

add the stringy insides to your compost pile. (After the holiday, ask an adult to cut your jack-o'-lantern into chunks and add those to the compost pile or bin, too.)

- Reuse decorations from last year or make new ones from materials you have around the house. Old clothes can be used to create a scarecrow, cardboard can be cut out to become spooky gravestones or ghosts, milk jugs can become reusable jack-o'-lanterns, and extra string or yarn scraps can create a spider web!
- As adults are buying candy to give away, remind them what kids like (and don't like).
- Use a reusable trick-or-treat bag or bucket and store it for future Halloweens.

What Would You Do?



Credit: kali9 | iStock | Getty Images Plus



Credit: MBI | iStock | Getty Images Plus



Credit: Ridofranz | iStock | Getty Images Plus

Instructions: Read each problem and then select the two best suggestions. Label one "good" and the other "better." (Hint: One idea on each list is not a very good idea, so leave that one blank.)

1. Jayden wants to add a compost bin to his school vegetable garden. What should he do?
 - A. _____ Yell at the students weeding the garden because they aren't composting.
 - B. _____ Research compost bins, select a good spot for the bin in or near the garden, ask his friends to volunteer for the compost team, and meet with the school's green team and sponsor to present a plan and ask permission.
 - C. _____ Talk to the teacher who sponsors the garden about the benefits of composting.
2. Lizzie and her family often have leftovers after they go out for pizza. What should she do?
 - A. _____ Ask the waiter for a box and take the leftover pizza home to eat tomorrow.
 - B. _____ Leave the pizza behind. Leftovers are gross!
 - C. _____ Plan ahead by putting a washable container into a bag and taking it into the restaurant.
3. Maya didn't remember all her supplies on the first day of school. Now she needs #2 pencils and loose-leaf paper by next Monday. What should she do?
 - A. _____ Look through old supplies at home in drawers and closets. Maybe she will find some of what she needs there.
 - B. _____ Make a list of what she needs and ask to buy these items during the family's regular weekly shopping trip.
 - C. _____ Get off of the bus and insist that an adult drive her to the store right away.

Funded by Thurston County Public Works, Solid Waste Division

Thurston County Public Works
Solid Waste Division

9605 Tilley Road S., Suite C ♦ Olympia, WA 98512
360-867-2491 ♦ SolidWasteYouth@co.thurston.wa.us ♦ ThurstonSolidWaste.org

