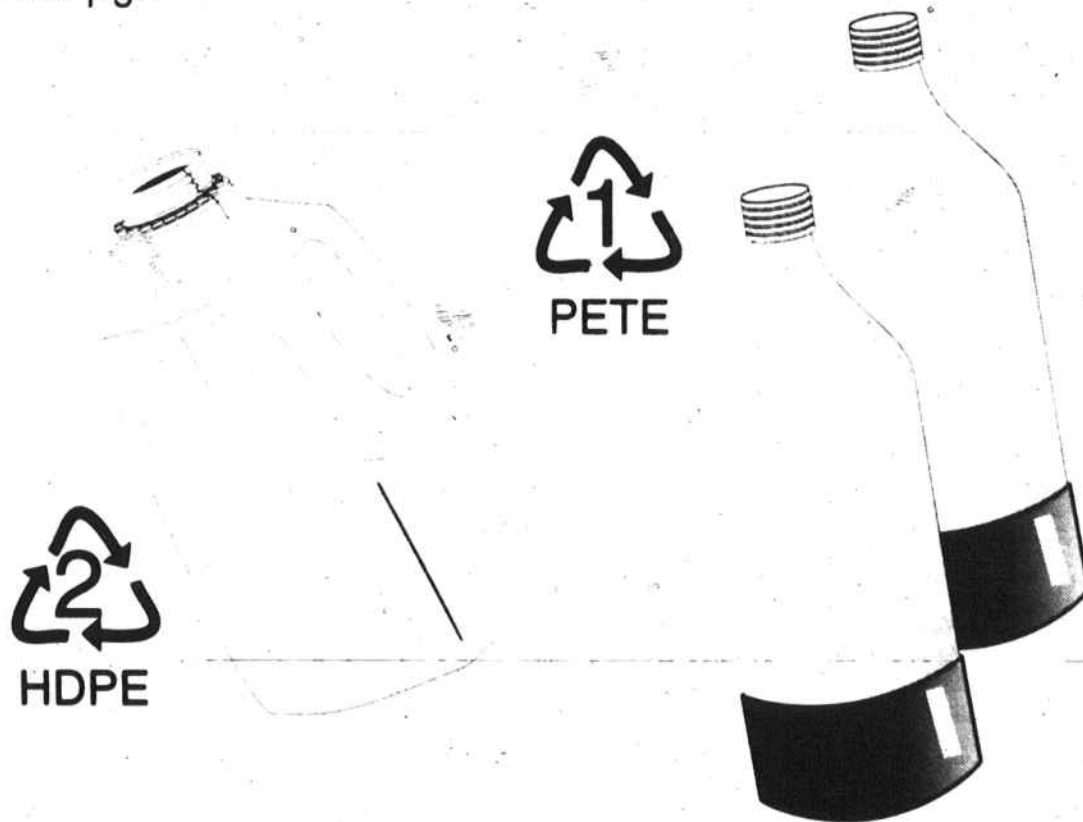


CONFUSED ABOUT PLASTICS? You're Not The ONLY One!

Wouldn't it be nice if recycling plastics was as clear as those soda bottles we toss in the bin? While that may be easy, it becomes a somewhat cloudy issue when looking at the plethora of plastics in use today and how best to recycle them.

Plastics recycling is relatively new compared to aluminum and newspaper recycling which have been going on for years and years and years. The technology and the markets for these products have been long established. This is not the case with plastics. The technology is very new and limited to certain plastic containers. Of the seven different categories of plastic, stable markets have emerged for only two types of plastic containers, namely plastic soft drink bottles and plastic milk jugs.



CONFUSING CODES

The stamped-on number code with the recycling arrows on plastic bottles is a resin identification code which indicates only what type of plastic the bottle is made of. **The number code does not mean that the container is recyclable.** There has been a great deal of controversy over this coding system because the arrows do mislead one to believe containers with this symbol are recyclable, when that is not always the case. Recyclers experience a great deal of frustration when they try to recycle a coded plastic bottle and it is left behind in the green bin.

Because of the confusion over the code, the National Recycling Coalition is working with the Society of Plastics Industry (SPI), inventor of the resin code, to arrive at a consensus on proposed alterations and proper use of the code.

SO, REMEMBER...

You can help the City and BFI reduce the cost of collection and sortation by putting only plastic soft drink bottles and milk jugs in your green bin.

That's why municipal recycling programs like Winston-Salems' RECYCLE TODAY curbside program limit collection of plastic bottles to milk jugs and soda bottles, because we are assured of buyers who will convert these containers into a variety of new products.

"WHY JUST THESE?", YOU MIGHT ASK.

Here's a breakdown of why markets will not buy other plastics:

Other #1 Plastics: An example of other #1 plastics is cooking oil bottles and they are called "custom containers" because their shape is custom made for product quality reasons as well as consumer appeal. Their custom shapes make sorting a nightmare. Also, many of these containers have neck rings which are made from a different type of plastic causing markets to reject them. In addition, food residue such as peanut butter and cooking oil left in the bottles are considered contaminants making them unacceptable.

Other #2 Plastics: These containers consist primarily of colored detergent bottles, juice bottles, etc. and due to the different coloring, these containers have limited end uses and are in low demand. Also, some bottles labeled #2 have a thin inner coating which is a different type of plastic and even this small amount makes the bottle unacceptable.

#3, #4, #5, #6 & #7 Plastics: The technology and demand for recycling these plastics lags far behind. In addition, the fact that there are so many different types would make sorting very labor intensive and not economical.

While we're waiting for markets to develop for these plastic containers, don't be frustrated. Shop for the same product packaged in glass or another recyclable container!

