

Holiday Recycling in the Russian River Watershed

It's the holiday season and that means more trash will be generated than at any other time of the year. After the holidays, you'll likely be left with some cleanup—wrapping paper and packaging—not to mention the tree itself. If your gifts include new electronic devices, such as a new flatscreen TV, laptop or digital camera, you might find yourself with the challenge of properly disposing of your old equipment. Thanks to Sonoma and Mendocino Counties, there are many opportunities in the Russian River Watershed to easily recycle your wastes.

Wrapping paper and ribbon--- Recyclable paper makes up a large portion, about 27%, of what's going into our garbage. Holiday paper and cardboard packaging can be recycled along with other year-round paper items like catalogs and magazines in your single-stream curbside recycling cart. Only foil-backed and plastic wrapping paper cannot be recycled.

Save ribbon to reuse on next year's packages.

Packaging---If you accumulate packing peanuts and bubble wrap over the holidays, many local packaging stores and mail centers are glad to accept these items for reuse.

Veggie food scraps--Compost your veggies! Fruits, vegetables, peels and seeds can be composted at home. In fact about 35% of residential garbage is food waste, a resource that could be used instead of landfilled. In Sonoma County, veggie food scraps can be put in the curbside yard waste carts for the municipal composting program. In Mendocino County visit www.mendorecycle.org or call the Recycling Hotline at 468-9704 for veggie food scrap recycling options.

Christmas trees--- Christmas trees can be recycled into compost and mulch! Your tree needs to be free of flocking, tinsel, decorations and its stand for recycling.

For pick-up, and drop-off options, in Sonoma County call the Eco-Desk at 565-3375 or visit www.recyclenow.org; in Mendocino County contact the Recycling Hotline or web site listed above.

Electronics---Under a State mandate, electronics cannot be put in the garbage. An electronic device is anything with a circuit board. Look for devices with digital displays or programmable features. Examples include computers, TVs, laptops, printers, answering machines, CD & DVD players, stereos and cell phones. Your options for proper disposal of electronics depend on your waste hauler and other County services. In some areas small electronic devices can be disposed of in curbside recycling: For a complete list of services for your area, in Sonoma County call the Eco-Desk at 565-3375 or visit www.recyclenow.org; and in Mendocino County call the Recycling Hotline at 468-9704 or visit www.mendorecycle.org.

Batteries---Batteries should **not** be placed in the trash. Batteries are recycled by different processes than electronic equipment and should be removed from electronic equipment prior to recycling. By law, retailers selling rechargeable batteries are required to take back used rechargeable batteries from their customers. For a list of these retailers, visit the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporations's web site at www.rbrc.org

Some stores offer take-back for alkaline batteries, in addition to rechargeables. These stores include Whole Foods Markets, REI and the Computer Recycling Center, and many hardware stores and home improvement centers. All kinds of household batteries can also be disposed of through Sonoma County's Household Toxics Program and the Mendocino County HazMobile Program. For a complete list of options, contact the Sonoma County Eco-Desk or the Mendocino County Recycling Hotline.

More Recycling Information---For any questions about recycling and year round disposal options:

- In Sonoma County, see the Sonoma County Recycling Guide printed in the AT&T phone book Yellow Pages under Recycling, call the Sonoma County Eco-Desk at 565-DESK (3375) or visit www.recyclenow.org
- In Mendocino County, see the Mendocino County Recycling Guide available through you waste hauler or from most cities, call the Recycling Hotline at 468-9704 or visit www.mendorecycle.org.

This article was authored by Karina Chilcott and Lisa Steinman of the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, with contributions from the Mendocino Solid Waste Management Authority, on behalf of RRWA. RRWA (www.rrwatershed.org) is an association of local public agencies in the Russian River Watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, fisheries restoration, and watershed enhancement.

