

5. What's the difference between compostable and biodegradable?

Products labeled as compostable must be tested to meet US industrial composting standards ASTM D6400 and ASTM D6868. The **BPI Certification** program is a third-party verification of the ASTM standards for compostable. These standards require that compostable products **biodegrade within 90 days and leave no harmful residue**. All compostable products are biodegradable, but not all biodegradable products are compostable.

6. What's wrong with just using my garbage disposal?

First, many items are not suitable for garbage disposals (banana peels, coffee grinds, tea bags, eggshells). **Second**, food scraps are flushed away with other local waste, and processing the sewage consumes large amounts of electricity, water, and chemicals. **Third**, the resulting *biosolids* are not truly compost, and may still contain pathogens and pollutants.

7. What should I do with grease, fat, and oils?

Small amounts of oil on your leftovers, fat on your meat bones, and grease on your paper towels are all acceptable for composting. Larger quantities of grease, fat, and oils should NOT be added to your food scraps (not compostable) nor be put down the kitchen drain (clogs the plumbing). Put larger quantities into your trash in *unbreakable, tightly closed, containers*.

8. What happens to the food scraps after they are collected?

The food scraps collected in Charlestown's dining/kitchen operation, and the food scraps brought to the Wednesday Drop-offs by residents, are picked up by Charlestown's contractor, Veterans' Compost.

9. Why are we collecting food scraps?

Out of the entire US food supply, 30-40% goes to waste and ends up in landfills, trash incinerators, or our garbage disposals. The food trapped in landfills doesn't properly decompose, producing the greenhouse gas methane; incinerated food creates harmful chemicals and air pollutants; and food going down our garbage disposals requires excessive use of water, electricity, and chemicals to process. But the food scraps that we, as residents, contribute for composting (a natural process to decompose organic materials) are transformed into garden-ready compost, adding nutrients back into Maryland's soil. This process supports both sustainable agriculture and local businesses.



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