

## Holiday Tips: What is Recyclable and What is Trash?

Chanel Quail, Recycling Specialist

The holiday season is upon us, and with that comes good food; time spent with family and friends; and recycling questions! Below is a refresher for residents and a cheat sheet for out of town guests that are unfamiliar with Onondaga County's recycling rules. With recycling markets depressed, it is more important than ever to make sure you only recycle acceptable items that can be turned into new products.



Photo credit: iStock.com, 2018.

### REUSE these items:

- Gift bags and boxes.
- Ribbons and bows.
- Wrapping paper.

### RECYCLE these items:

- Greeting cards and envelopes (nothing metallic, glitter or foil-lined).
- Gift boxes.
- Gift bags (glossy is okay, just no glittery or metallic/foil bags).
- Cardboard boxes.
- Catalogs and magazines.
- Clean aluminum foil and disposable aluminum baking trays.
- Wrapping paper (except metallic/foil paper)
- Christmas trees. (*See article on page 6 for details.*)

### TRASH these items (if you can't reuse them):

- Metallic or foil wrapping paper, gift bags.
- Metallic or foil greeting cards, and envelopes.
- Ribbons and bows.
- Tissue paper.
- Styrofoam.

### DONATE these items (if you can't reuse them)

- Make the holidays a time to sort through your things and give to the less fortunate.
- Clothes.
  - Shoes/Belts.
  - Toys.
  - Books (softcovers can be recycled in the blue bin).
- To make holiday sorting easier, have a trash bag and

blue bin right next to where gifts are unwrapped. Make a game of it and educate your friends and family!

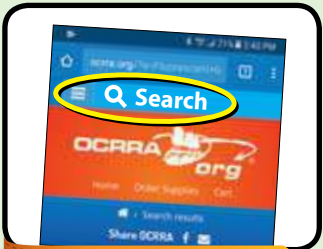
Have questions about what can be recycled throughout the year? Visit **OCRRA.org** and use the "How do I get rid of..." search bar at the top of the page for answers.

Chanel Quail can be reached at [cquail@ocrra.org](mailto:cquail@ocrra.org).



### SITE CLOSURE ..... PG 2

Rock Cut Road Transfer Station closes January 1 for construction.



### HOW DO I...? ..... PG 2

Searchable database offers tips on how to recycle and dispose of hundreds of items.



### NEW HIRE..... PG 3

OCRRA welcomes Cristina Alunio as agency engineer.



### MASTRI AWARD ..... PG 5

Bellevue Elementary garners 2018 Recycling Excellence Award.



### PLASTICS ..... PG 8

Plastic clamshells (e.g., berry cartons) should NOT go in your blue bin.

## 600+ Grams of Mercury Removed from Waste Stream

On August 13, OCRRA and Covanta Energy hosted a Mercury Thermometer / Thermostat Collection Event. Mercury is a neurotoxin that can harm humans and animals. 109 thermostats and 168 thermometers were collected at the event. That means residents removed roughly 600 grams of mercury from our waste stream, which is equivalent to the amount of mercury found in 151,000 compact florescent bulbs (CFLs). OCRRA extends a huge thank you to everyone that attended!



Photo credit: Klineberg Photography, Syracuse, 2018.

# Rock Cut Road Closes for Long-Term Construction on January 1

*Regulation changes necessitate upgrades; customers directed to Ley Creek Site until further notice*

*Kristen Lawton, Public Information Officer*

Recently, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation issued revised solid waste facility regulations that require the majority of OCRRA's operations to take place indoors. As a result, the Rock Cut Road Transfer Station will be closed starting January 1, 2019 for major site upgrades. It will be closed for at least a year, possibly longer pending construction progress.

When the site reopens, Rock Cut Road's small business operations and Ley Creek's commercial operations will both be serviced at the Rock Cut Road Transfer Station. OCRRA is working on the feasibility of incorporating residential operations there in the future. At this stage there are three possible outcomes:

1) commercial and small business traffic (trucks and trailers) will begin using Rock Cut Road when construction is complete and residential traffic (folks dropping off bagged trash and recycling) will remain at Ley Creek;

2) commercial and small business traffic will begin using Rock Cut Road when construction is complete and residential traffic will be integrated at a future time;

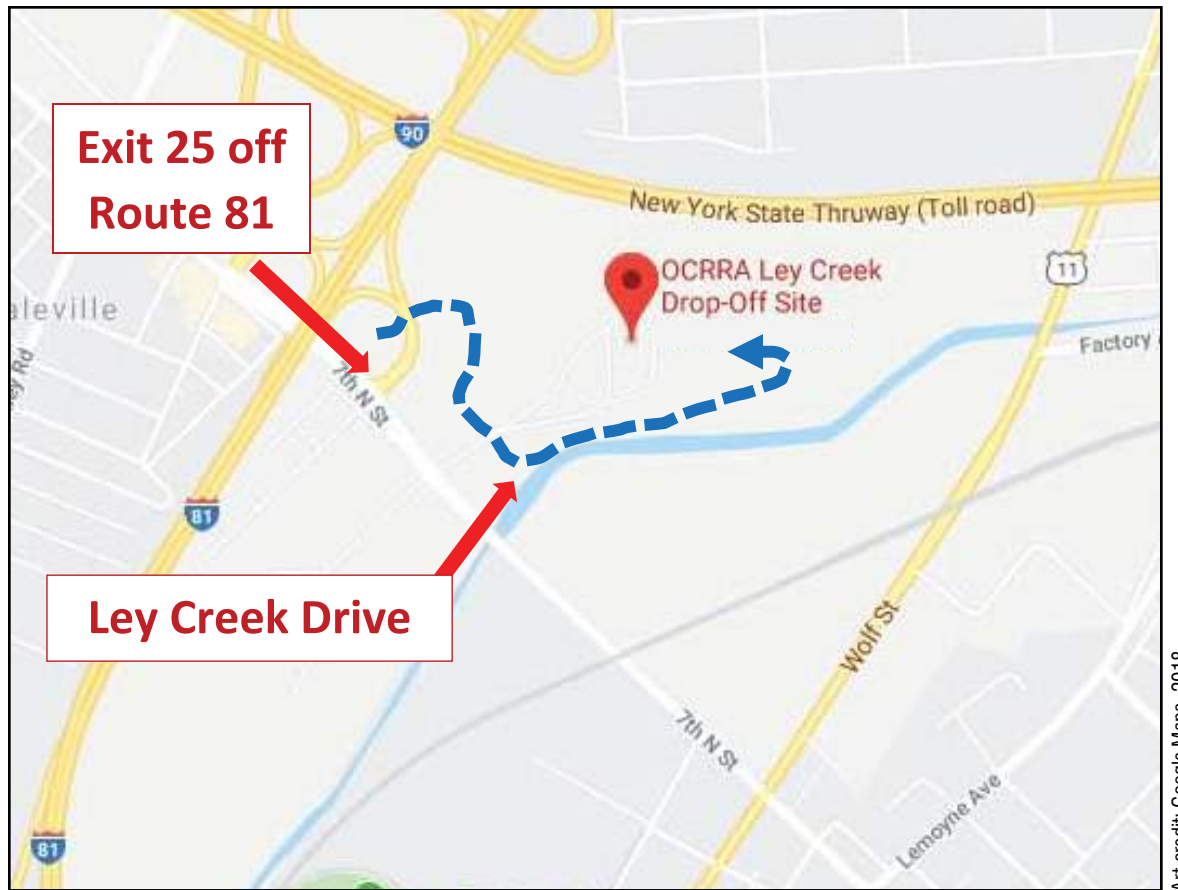
3) commercial, small business and residential traffic will return to Rock Cut Road when construction is complete.

### Where to go?

While the upgrades are ongoing, all users – residential, small business and commercial – may bring their materials to OCRRA's Ley Creek Transfer Station. It is located at 5158 Ley Creek Drive in Liverpool (exit 25 off Route 81; take a left onto 7th North St. and then a left onto Ley Creek Dr., opposite the Pilot Gas Station).

All services offered at the Rock Cut Road Transfer Station will be offered in a similar manner at the Ley Creek Transfer Station during the closure. Signage and staff will direct customers according to their specific needs.

The Ley Creek Transfer Station is open Monday-



Beginning Jan. 1, 2019 the Rock Cut Road Transfer Station in Jamesville will be closed for construction. Starting on Jan. 1 and until further notice, all customers should use OCRRA's Ley Creek Transfer Station (5158 Ley Creek Drive in Liverpool, just off the 7th North Street exit of Route 81). Pardon the inconvenience as improvements are made to the site.

Friday from 6:30 am to 2:00 pm. **To better accommodate residential users, starting January 1, 2019, Ley Creek will have special weekend hours: every Saturday of the month, from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm.** Until January 1, 2019, Ley Creek is only open the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month from 8:00 am – 12:00 pm.

For a list of disposal fees, please visit: [www.ocrra.org/locations/drop-off-locations/ley-creek/](http://www.ocrra.org/locations/drop-off-locations/ley-creek/)

### Stay Informed

If you are not already on OCRRA's email list, please consider joining and following us on Facebook to be notified of the site's progress. You can sign up

for OCRRA's email list at [OCRRA.org](http://www.ocrra.org) (see green "Join Our Mailing List" area at the bottom of page).

OCRRA apologizes for any inconvenience this causes and appreciates your patience as these improvements take place.

*Kristen Lawton can be reached at [klawton@ocrra.org](mailto:klawton@ocrra.org).*

## Settle the Debate with OCRRA's Searchable Database

*Dale Cocca, Recycling Specialist*

As a recycling specialist who works at various public events, it seems that a favorite pastime in many households is a perpetual spousal debate as to whether pizza boxes belong in the trash or recycling. Whether the subject of contention is pizza boxes, coat hangers, bottle caps, egg cartons, or any other random item, the debate can be settled once and for all with a quick trip to [OCRRA.org](http://www.ocrra.org).

These, and literally hundreds of other common (and uncommon) items have their proper disposal methods explained in

OCRRA's searchable database.

You cannot always get away with Googling your question, because different items are treated differently depending on where you live. So, if you are not getting information from OCRRA, you could be getting the right information, but for the wrong place... which makes it the wrong information for you.

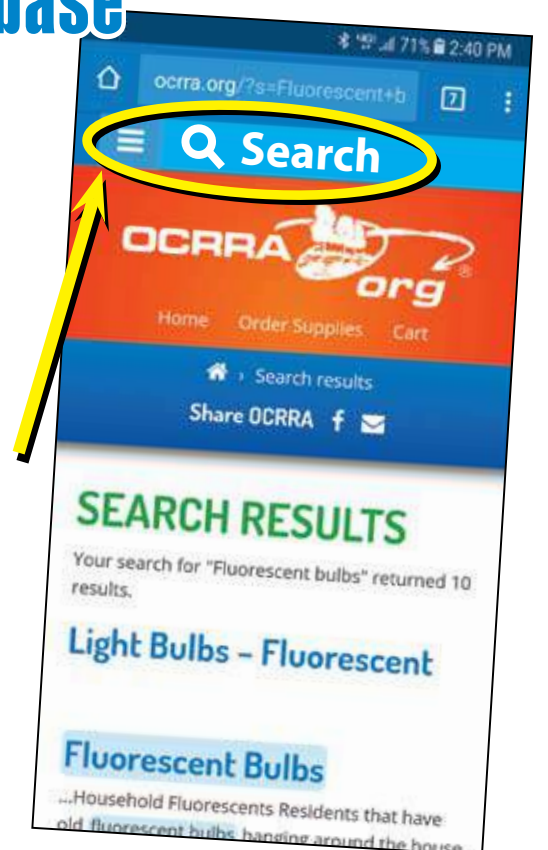
Simply visit [OCRRA.org](http://www.ocrra.org), and the search bar will be right there at the top of the page, front and center, waiting to answer the very question, "How do I get rid of..."

**OCRRA's searchable database gives you direct access to the most up-to-date information on proper disposal of hundreds of materials in Onondaga County.**

In fact, it is worth double checking some of those things that you have not disposed of in a long time, just to make sure you are doing it right today. Come to think of it, outdated information may be the very reason those spousal debates exist.

Maybe.

*Dale Cocca can be reached at [dcocca@ocrra.org](mailto:dcocca@ocrra.org).*



## Albunio Joins OCRRA Team as Environmental Engineer

*Coming to OCRRA brought things full circle for local solid waste engineer*

*Cristina Albunio, Agency Engineer*

I'm so excited to introduce myself as OCRRA's newest addition. My role as the Agency Engineer is cemented deep in my roots and I'd like to tell you why I am here.

I grew up on Staten Island. If you know anything about Staten Island, you know it is home to what was the world's largest landfill. From 1948 until 2001, the Fresh Kills Landfill grew to cover 2,200 acres, holding approximately 150 million tons of solid waste. The landfill may now be closed, but that trash will be forever sealed in Staten Island's land.

As a teenager, I moved to Central New York and attended Cicero-North Syracuse High School. I took an Environmental Science course elective my junior year and visited the county's Waste-to-Energy Facility. The engineer who gave the tour was inspiring. The impressive facility was two years old at that time, and the technology used to reduce the footprint of our county's waste was stimulating enough to drive my career choice. The process of extracting recyclable metals from waste, creating energy and using state-of-the-art air pollution control equip-

ment made me realize that landfills were not the only method to dispose trash. I decided to study Environmental Resources and Forest Engineering at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

Little did I know, this experience in high school would come full circle a few decades later, and I would be able to join OCRRA in their mission to sustain a world-class waste management system that benefits our community and environment.

Between college and OCRRA, I spent 16 years working for Arcadis as a

consulting civil/environmental engineer. I worked on a wide variety of landfill projects for municipal, industrial and hazardous wastes. Other projects on my resume include working with industrial sites in environmentally sensitive regions of our country, including brownfield remediation projects and Superfund sites.

These experiences have given me the expertise to support Onondaga County with sustainable waste management initiatives. But, the reason why I am here, is my passion to help our local community mini-



Cristina Albunio,  
OCRRA Engineer

mize the footprints we are leaving on our planet. I look forward to what lies ahead. *Cristina Albunio can be reached at [calbunio@ocrra.org](mailto:calbunio@ocrra.org).*



## Recycling Rhoda

Talks Trash –  
and Recycling!

### How to Recycle Shredded Paper

*Dear Recycling Rhoda,*

*For years I have been diligently shredding my confidential documents and placing them inside a stapled, paper bag inside my blue bin.*

*It made me feel good to know that I was protecting my identity and the planet simultaneously, by recycling my shredded paper the way that OCRRA told me to. But now it seems that your message has changed – and I'm no longer supposed to put shredded paper into a paper bag, staple it shut, and place it in my blue bin. Is that for real?*

*-Peeved in Pompey*

Dear Peeved,

First, thank you so much for listening to OCRRA's recycling messages over the years, it's good to know people are paying attention. Second, of course shred-

ded paper can still be recycled and, third, guess what? Things occasionally change over the course of several decades.

Just like mankind, even recycling practices evolve over time. You are correct that we used to advise shredded paper could be recycled in the blue bin, if you put it in a bag and stapled it shut, but that is NO LONGER THE CASE.

Why not? Recycling facilities are not able to capture that material. Back in the day it could be hand removed, but that is no longer possible.

**The most efficient way to recycle your shredded paper is to bring it to Bodow Recycling in Syracuse** (just off Hiawatha Boulevard near Destiny USA). They send your

shredded paper to processing facilities that turn it into recycled paper products like toilet paper and tissues.

As an added bonus, when it is collected separately (so not in the blue bin with lots of other materials) the bags don't break open and the material doesn't fall through the cracks at a sorting facility and end up as trash.

**All** of your shredded paper gets recycled when it goes to **Bodow Recycling**. So, embrace the change and ensure that your shredded paper gets to live another useful life.

Alternatively, **BEFORE** you shred your confidential documents, bring them to Simple Shred or your nearest Office Max or Staples location and they will shred them for you. Call ahead for pricing and material prepa-

ration instructions. Visit [www.tinyurl.com/ShredAllYear](http://www.tinyurl.com/ShredAllYear) or call OCRRA at (315) 453-2866 for details.

While we're on the topic of shredding paper – let's review what you should actually shred in the first place. Unless your document contains information that is truly *confidential*, it does NOT NEED TO BE SHREDED.

That's right Agent Double-O-Seven, your junk mail flyers and your old magazine subscriptions should not be shredded. Save yourself some time at your home shredder – or money at a shredding location – and only shred **confidential** items.

A confidential document is something that has specific, sensitive information on it such as your social

security number, a full bank account number, your tax information or a medical record. Any other piece of paper with your name and/or address on it is not confidential. It does not need to be shredded; it can be recycled in your blue bin along with all of your other household recyclables such as plastic bottles, cardboard boxes and metal soup cans.

What should a business or resident with particularly large volumes of sensitive papers do? Visit **OCRRA.org** and type in "confidential documents" in the search bar for a list of locations that can securely destroy your paper and recycle it.

Respectfully,

*Recycling  
Rhoda*

# Walking the Talk: OCRRA and Office Food Scrap Composting

Dale Cocca, Recycling Specialist

Not everyone at OCRRA has the same personal or political views, nor likes the same food, nor agrees on a comfortable office temperature. OCRRA is a group of completely different people – just like every other workplace. But, that doesn't mean OCRRA can't coalesce around a shared goal, such as office food scrap composting, just like G&C Foods in Van Buren did recently.

In February, the G&C Foods Green Team reached out to OCRRA for insight on starting an office food scrap composting program. After a free consultation, a pilot program was put into effect. G&C Foods Green Team member, Jim Costello, reports that the program is still going strong and that much was learned along the way.

Seeing the program take off at G&C Foods was a good motivator for OCRRA to start walking the composting walk by adding office composting to its modest breakroom. Food scrap composting can be done in any workplace, large or small. For perspective, OCRRA has about

20 employees in our main office; G&C Foods has about 275 people at its Van Buren location.

An effective food scrap composting program is built through education. Costello noted education was especially important at his company. Having posters and "table talkers" or small flyers at each breakroom table explaining the program was critical, especially for new employees. As many will attest, new things that show up without explanation tend to get questioned or ignored (unless those things are cookies).

At OCRRA, an office-wide email was sent informing staff of the voluntary composting program and a decal illustrating the types of acceptable food was placed on the collection receptacle. OCRRA uses a two gallon "compost caddy," lined with a compostable bag, that sits on the counter in the breakroom.

In comparison, at the much larger G&C Foods, the composting infrastructure is three, 2.5-gallon buckets with compostable liners on table tops that

are emptied into a larger 30-gallon bucket in the breakroom.

Both G&C Foods and OCRRA have dedicated people who personally take the week's food scraps to OCRRA's Amboy Compost Site. This role can be a labor of love and requires a little lifting; for instance, G&C Foods diverts 60-80 pounds of food waste a week!

There are other options besides self-hauling though. The offices of both Arcadis and Barton & Loguidice contract with an organics hauler to have their office food waste taken to OCRRA's Amboy Compost Site.

OCRRA produces about seven pounds of food waste a week, zero fruit flies and a sense of environmental responsibility that everyone can get behind. Looking to start an office composting program at work? OCRRA will help every step of the way by offering free advice and decals. Contact OCRRA today for a free consultation at (315) 453-2866, ext. 1208 or [dcocca@ocrra.org](mailto:dcocca@ocrra.org).

Dale Cocca can be reached at [dcocca@ocrra.org](mailto:dcocca@ocrra.org).



Photo credit: OCRRA, North Syracuse, 2018.

OCRRA's Rusty Hunt scrapes her lunch scraps into a breakroom compost bin. OCRRA is an example of a small office environment that reduces waste through food scrap composting. No matter how large or small a workplace is, food scrap composting is easy to do and OCRRA is here to help. Contact OCRRA for a free consultation and get started today.

## 30,000 Pounds of Textiles Kept Out of the Trash



Photo credit: Klineberg Photography, Syracuse, 2018.

William Lord and Anterio Hardwick unload textiles from a vehicle at OCRRA's Textile Collection event at Destiny USA on October 20. More than 500 residents dropped off 31,680 pounds of clothing and textiles (six truckloads worth).

All materials were donated to the Rescue Mission and the Salvation Army. Proceeds from the sale and recycling of these items help fund the charitable missions of these organizations, which change lives in our community.

Did you know clothes and textiles can be donated all year long? All dry clothes, even if they are ripped, stained, missing buttons or have broken zippers; all textiles, even if they are beyond use, including towels, blankets and sheets are eligible for recycling.

For a list of drop off locations visit [www.tinyurl.com/CNY-textiles](http://www.tinyurl.com/CNY-textiles). Textiles and clothing DO NOT go in the blue bin.



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**OCRRA**

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KRISTEN LAWTON  
Public Information Officer  
and Editor  
Printed on Recycled Paper

OCRRA's waste reduction, reuse and recycling program efforts (including this newsletter) are partially financed by a grant from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

# Become a Workplace Recycling Champion: Order Free Supplies

Dale Cocca, Recycling Specialist

Do you have a friend who laments how their workplace doesn't recycle, or doesn't recycle well enough? Or, maybe you feel like *your* workplace could do a better job at recycling but don't know how to approach it? OCRRA invites all businesses to join the many businesses in Onondaga County – large and small – that have taken advantage of OCRRA's free recycling consultation and supplies to help institute a functional recycling program. And don't worry – this isn't a whistle blowing type of call (or email). While recycling is mandatory for businesses in Onondaga County, OCRRA is here to encourage good recycling practices and doesn't penalize businesses that are making the effort to recycle, even if they hadn't before.

You don't have to be head of facilities or the owner of the company to reach out to OCRRA for a consultation

either – every workplace needs a recycling champion and it can be anyone in the organization. Sometimes it just takes having an outside organization come in to consult to move an effort along.

Nearly 90% of all waste generated in the county comes from commercial sources, so making sure that workplaces are doing an excellent job of recycling is of critical importance. However, waste reduction from the start is just as important as ensuring first-rate recycling practices. Looking at how much material is finding its way to the trash AND recycling can help reduce unnecessary consumption and save businesses money.

The first step is to call (315) 453-2866 or visit **OCRRA.org** to schedule a consultation. Then a recycling specialist will come by. This is typically a 30-minute visit of your

workplace to help OCRRA see what is already in place. Next the recycling specialist will guide you through best practices for signage, containers, outside services and communications.

Many organizations choose to get a head start by visiting <https://business.ocrra.org> and placing an order for free recycling supplies, which can even be delivered at the time of your recycling consultation.

**Taking advantage of these free offerings reduces the use of natural resources and can improve your workplace's bottom line;** contact OCRRA today.

Dale Cocca can be reached at [dcocca@ocrra.org](mailto:dcocca@ocrra.org).

**PLASTIC BAGS:**  
Cannot go in the blue bin – recycle them at big box stores or supermarkets.




Photo credit: OCRRA, North Syracuse, 2018.

OCRRA offers free recycling containers, posters and decals to help your workplace recycle more. Visit **OCRRA.org** to order business recycling supplies online or contact us for a free consultation to see how OCRRA can help you recycle more.

# Recycling Excellence Award Goes to Bellevue Elementary School

*Stellar city school demonstrates recycling aptitude that is example to all Onondaga County schools*

Theresa Evans, Recycling Specialist

Congratulations to Bellevue Elementary School in Syracuse, the 2018 winner of OCRRA's Matri Recycling Excellence Award. This annual award is given to a school within the City of Syracuse, in honor of Dr. Vonnell Matri, a former educator at Onondaga Community College and a City of Syracuse appointee to the OCRRA Board of Directors at the time of her death.

The passionate leadership of teacher John-Henry Jackson and Head Custodian Mike Hodgson inspire building-wide recycling success at Bellevue. What makes Bellevue's recycling program special is how actively involved and

engaged the students are in the entire process. "The students have been a huge part of our extra recycling efforts, such as color coding the bins and the creation of a 'We Share' food table in the cafeteria to help reduce waste," says Jackson.

**Bellevue students take a hands-on role in building-wide recycling.** They completed evaluations of school waste and used the data to write public service announcements to rally their peers and raise environmental awareness throughout the school. The students have experimented with onsite food scrap composting and created a "We Share" table for unopened food items to cut

down on wasted food in the cafeteria.

The faculty and staff are also enthusiastic participants in Bellevue's waste reduction and recycling programs through diligent scrap paper reuse, copying and printing on both sides of a sheet of paper, and by limiting access to printing in general. The plentiful recycling efforts of the administration, teachers, custodial staff and the students themselves make a great team at Bellevue Elementary. OCRRA applauds them all.

Other schools in the City of Syracuse that would like recognition for their recycling efforts, or that would like recommendations for



Photo credit: Klineberg Photography, Syracuse, 2018.

Mr. Jackson's Recycling Club students at Bellevue Elementary accept the Matri Recycling Excellence Award and Earth flag on behalf of their school. Stellar recycling and waste reduction practices made Bellevue a standout school in this year's Matri competition.

improvement to get their program to Matri-level recycling excellence, should contact OCRRA today. Theresa Evans can be reached at [tevans@ocrra.org](mailto:tevans@ocrra.org).

## Ways to Recycle (Real) Christmas Trees



Photo credit: iStock.com, 2018.

Some municipalities offer curbside collection of retired Christmas trees – the real kind, not the artificial ones. If your community does not offer this service, OCRRA has you covered.

Starting Wednesday, January 2 through Friday, January 11, 2019, residents may drop their real Christmas trees off at either the Amboy or Jamesville Compost Site for free. Both sites are open for tree drop off, Monday-Friday from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm. There are no weekend hours.

**Tip:** Your tree must be free of ornaments, garland, tinsel, lights, bows, cords, wires and tree stands.

Removing these items from your

tree, if you recycle it with OCRRA OR your municipality is very important. Ultimately, these trees are ground into mulch or compost that residents use in their gardens and landscapes in the spring. Plastic, metal and glass items contaminate the end products, so be sure to remove them.

No wreaths or garland will be accepted at OCRRA Compost Sites, nor curbside by municipalities, as they contain wire. Bag these items up and throw them out with household trash. Artificial trees are not accepted at OCRRA Compost Sites, nor curbside by municipalities either; please bag them up and place them with your trash.

### Christmas Tree Drop Off Details

**Wednesday, January 2 - Friday, January 11, 2019**  
**Monday-Friday, 7:30 am - 4:00 pm (no weekends)**

**Amboy Compost Site**  
 6296 Airport Road  
 Camillus, NY 13209

**Jamesville Compost Site**  
 4370 Route 91,  
 Jamesville, NY 13078

## Reduce Waste and Recycle Plastic Bags and Wraps at Big Box Stores

Did you know film plastics (plastic bags and wraps) that often become litter and pollute our waterways make up 5% (28 million pounds) of our trash each year? They are one of the top three items in our trash that can be recycled – just not in the blue bin.

Stores that accept plastic bags for recycling, including grocery stores, chain drug stores, and other big box stores can accept other film plastics, too. However,

all types of film plastic are not acceptable.

What (clean and dry) film plastics can you recycle?

Film plastics that stretch when pulled apart, instead of doing nothing or tearing in a clean line can be recycled at big box stores.

**A good test is to make a short, clean cut with scissors and then try tearing it. If it easily separates on a crisp line, it is trash.** Some examples of thin plastics that tear and are

trash would be chip bags, candy wrappers, bags for prewashed salad mixes and Cellophane wrap like what fresh flowers are wrapped in. These loud “crinkly” plastics should be trashed.

**Examples of recyclable film plastics:** plastic bags, bread bags, produce bags, zip-top bags, newspaper sleeves, dry cleaning bags, over wraps / shrink wraps, such as for water bottle cases and paper towels, and shipping pillows.

Drop these items off for recycling at your nearest big box store that gives out plastic bags. Please remember: **these items should not go in your blue bin; they wind around equipment at the recycling facility and contaminate recycling.**

By dropping off these materials, you are supporting a strong North American market for clean, uncontaminated film plastics. These materials are remanufactured into products,

such as new plastic bags, plastic benches and playground equipment, composite plastic decking, and plastic crates and pallets.



## Electronics Recycling



Photo credit: iStock.com, 2018.

Need to get rid of an old TV or other electronic device? **The Salvation Army on Erie Blvd. in Syracuse** will accept working and non-working TVs and monitors of any size. TVs and monitors cannot be physically broken. They will also accept other electronics\*. **Call (315) 445-0520 before dropping items off.**

Best Buy locations and Battery World will accept TVs and monitors for a charge, pending size. They will accept other electronics for free. **Call ahead for details:**

- **Best Buy, Destiny USA, (315) 426-1588;**
- **Best Buy, DeWitt, (315) 449-1784;**
- **Battery World, East Molloy Road, Syracuse, (315) 437-1404.**

Staples locations will accept electronics, excluding TVs. **Call ahead for details:**

- **Staples, Camillus, (315) 488-4071;**
- **Staples, Clay, (315) 715-0112;**
- **Staples, East Syracuse, (315) 463-8040.**

*\*Electronics include computers, monitors, keyboards, mice or similar pointing devices, fax machines, scanners, printers, and small electronic equipment (tablets, VCRs, DVRs, portable digital music players, DVD players, digital converter boxes, cable or satellite receivers, video game consoles, etc.).*

## Household Toxics Disposal

U.S. estimates indicate all homes have three–eight gallons of hazardous material lurking around. Safely get rid of them through OCRRA’s no cost drop off program. It runs year-round, Monday - Friday from 6:30 am - 6:00 pm and accepts items such as automotive products, oil-based paints, garden and

cleaning supplies. Schedule an appointment at **OCRRA.org** or call (315) 453-2866.

The drop off location is Environmental Products and Services, a company that specializes in proper disposal of hazardous materials. Staff will unload your vehicle and get you on your way in short order.





## From the Executive Director's Desk...

# Recycling is Worth It

DERETH GLANCE, Executive Director, OCRRA

Recycling is an essential part of how our community manages the discarded byproducts of our daily lives. Almost 40,000 tons of valuable material—aluminum, plastic bottles and paper are collected from our homes, sorted and marketed to live another useful life annually. Businesses and schools add another 140,000 tons of material to this total. This year, the markets are depressed due to global shifts in demand for materials. Costs are going up, but the value of recovering these critical commodities continues to be a worthy investment.

This fall, the recycling recession arrived in Onondaga County. The markets were so low for so long that the terms of the contract between OCRRA and the material recovery facility (or MRF, where your recyclables are sorted) had to be renegotiated. Costs ballooned with a five-

fold increase to OCRRA's financial exposure; from \$370,000 a year to now \$2 million. The sticker-shock of the cost increase hit OCRRA hard, just as it has shaken municipal recycling programs and operators across the region. The biggest driver is the loss of the Chinese export market, which previously had been the outlet for half the world's recovered paper. With elevated uncertainty, OCRRA and our local recycling partner, Waste Management-Recycle America forged forward to ensure recycling remains robust in Onondaga County.

While Onondaga County residents boast one of the smallest residue or contamination rates, meaning there isn't very much trash in our recycling, wide-spread recycling practices had gotten sloppy. Once insatiable overseas markets gobbled up bales of recyclables with residue rates as high

as 25%, until finally they had enough of unwanted garbage mixed with recyclables, and this outlet was shut off. Now communities are paying more for recycling materials than they had before.

Recycling has never been free. There are real costs associated with collection, sorting, equipment, labor and marketing recyclables. Historically, OCRRA insulated the public from the volatility of the markets by absorbing the costs in down markets and sharing the revenues in good markets. We did this so we could focus on what really matters: reducing waste by reinforcing our community's award-winning recycling habits (separating the right plastics, paper and metal from the garbage).

Markets bounce back, but good habits build over time. In the dozen years predating the closure of ——— *continued on page 8*

**Recycling 101**  
Get the basics on how to save the world a little each day®

Don't see an item on this list?  
Q. What are you looking for? How do I get rid of...  
Find the proper disposal method at [OCRRA.org](http://OCRRA.org).

Art credit: Pinckney Hugo Group, Syracuse, 2018.

Despite unprecedented lows in recycling markets, recycling still has value. Help Onondaga County retain its stature as a recycling powerhouse by keeping the recycling stream "clean." Recycle only what can be turned into new materials. Download the recently redesigned "Recycling 101" Guide at [OCRRA.org](http://OCRRA.org) for a simple explanation of what goes in the bin and what can be recycled beyond the bin.

### Curbside Recycling

- Newspapers, magazines, catalogs and softcover books**  
*Keep loose. Don't tie.*
- Cardboard, pizza, pasta, cereal boxes, etc.**  
*Flatten*
- Papers, mail, envelopes**
- Milk and juice cartons**  
*Empty and rinse.*
- Plastic bottles and jugs**  
*Empty and replace cap.*
- Cans and jars**  
*Empty and rinse. Labels are ok.*
- Plastic dairy tubs**  
*Empty and rinse; no lids.*

Get more details on what you can recycle in the blue bin and beyond at [www.OCRRA.org](http://www.OCRRA.org).

Art credit: Pinckney Hugo Group, Syracuse, 2018.

**FACT:** After 1/1, Ley Creek Transfer Station is open M-F, 6:30 AM-2:00 PM & Sat, 8 AM-12 PM (last car enters 1/2 hour before close).

# Recycling is Worth It

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the Chinese recycling market, OCRRA's recycling market support costs netted zero; in some years we paid and other years we shared in the revenues.

Recycling is a utility. And the closure of the Chinese market demonstrates that the recycling utility is vulnerable to global commodity market shifts. Much of our nation's recycling infrastructure was designed with a focus on recovering newsprint, a system created prior to the hand-held device dominated age that arrived so quickly.

As our consumer habits change, the recycling system must respond. Investments are needed to best capture valuable commodities – while local markets, such as paper repro-

cessors, are nurtured back here at home in the U.S.

**You add value to recycling when you recycle right.** Plastic bottles, jugs and stackable dairy tubs; metal cans; cardboard, paperboard boxes and sheets of paper are all things that go in your recycle bin.

**Please do not put any plastic bags in your recycling bin;** take your plastic bags and other film plastics (e.g., dry cleaning bags, newspaper bags, produce bags, overwrap on cases of water bottles, etc.) back to the store. **Donate your clean, worn-out or unwanted clothes.** Reuse all that you can, consider bringing your own bag, bottle, cup or container.

Visit [OCRRA.org](http://OCRRA.org) or post on OCRRA's Facebook page to get

answers to your questions. Download the newest recycling info sheet at [OCRRA.org](http://OCRRA.org). Sign up for our occasional email blasts at [OCRRA.org](http://OCRRA.org) at get the latest recycling updates.

Your actions make a difference and all together we are saving the world a little each day.

*Dereth Glance can be reached at [dglance@ocrra.org](mailto:dglance@ocrra.org).*



## QUESTION OF THE QUARTER

### Plastic Clamshells



**Q:** Hoping you can settle a household debate. Are the plastic berry cartons that strawberries, raspberries and blueberries come in recyclable? They have a recycling triangle on the bottom so I've been putting them in my blue bin, but my daughter says that's not right.

**A:** This is a great question because plastics recycling is a bit complex. The items you describe, which are referred to as "clamshells" – because they look like clamshells – are not accepted in the blue bin in Onondaga County. The recycling triangle on the bottom of all plastics denotes the TYPE of plastic they are made of, not whether they are recyclable (confusing, but true).

In Onondaga County the only plastics that should go in the blue bin are plastic bottles, jugs and dairy tubs that are stackable (e.g., butter tubs, cream cheese containers, Cool Whip tubs and the like). No other plastic should go in your blue bin as there are not reliable markets for these items, which means they are not able to, consistently, be recycled into new products.

It is more important than ever to keep our recycling stream clean and only put items in that can actually be made into new products. The cleaner our recycling stream, the better value it has and the less it costs our community to recycle.

## Green Up Onondaga County

For a better, greener tomorrow...

# PLANT A TREE!

## Annual Tree & Shrub Sale

Bare-Root Stock

Featuring Non-Invasive and Native Species

Taking Orders Through  
March 25, 2019

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- ✓ Deciduous Trees & Shrubs
- ✓ Conservation Pacs
- ✓ Bluebird & Bat Houses
- ✓ OCRRA's Premium Compost (40 Lb. Bags)



Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District  
Call 315-457-0325 for an order form or visit [www.ocswcd.org](http://www.ocswcd.org)

# Mark Your Calendar

**JAMESVILLE COMPOST SITE CLOSED UNTIL APRIL**  
**DEC. 1, 2018**

**ALL OCRRA SITES CLOSED**  
**DEC. 25, 2018**  
**JAN. 1, 2019**  
Happy Holidays!

**ROCK CUT ROAD DROP-OFF SITE CLOSED FOR LONG-TERM CONSTRUCTION**  
**TUESDAY 1/1/2019**

**MAIN OFFICE CLOSED**  
**MONDAY JAN. 21, 2019**  
**MONDAY FEB. 18, 2019**

**HOUSEHOLD TOXICS DROP-OFF**  
**Year-Round by Appointment ENVIRONMENTAL PRODUCTS & SERVICES**  
**M – F, 6:30 am – 6:00 pm**  
Register at [OCRRA.org](http://OCRRA.org).

**FACT:** Plastic bags do not go in the blue bin. Recycle clean and dry bags and plastic wraps at big box stores.