

# COMPOSTABLE PLASTICS ARE NOT ACTUALLY COMPOSTABLE.

## AND WHY YOU SHOULD AVOID THEM.

In recent years, the demand for eco-friendly packaging has driven many businesses to adopt “compostable” plastics such as utensils, cups, bowls, and plates made from bioplastics like PLA (Polylactic Acid). These are often marketed as sustainable alternatives to traditional plastic and often feature green labels and compost symbols that make them appear environmentally responsible. This is often referred to as “greenwashing.” In most cases, compostable plastics do not break down in local composting systems, and their use often creates more problems than they solve.



### Why Local Compost Facilities Reject Compostable Plastics

While the term “compostable” suggests these products will break down harmlessly in the environment, that is only true under very specific industrial conditions. Compostable plastics like PLA require high heat (above 130°F), consistent moisture, and a controlled microbial environment to break down. These conditions are not present in backyard compost piles or many industrial composting facilities. As a result, most compostable plastics:

- Do not break down fast enough at the facility. Composters often screen out materials that do not fully decompose within their required 30–60-day cycle.
- Look like regular plastic. It’s difficult to visually distinguish compostable plastics from conventional ones, which increases contamination risk.
- Damage trust and product quality. Consumers expect finished compost to be clean of contamination and plastic-free. Finding bits of “compostable” forks or lids in compost undermines credibility and usability.

### Better Alternatives for Businesses, Consider These Alternatives:

- Durable, reusable dishware whenever possible.
- Paper-based or fiber products.
- Clear signage and waste sorting
- Education to help staff and customers dispose of materials correctly.
- Reusable San Mateo County is working to eliminate our county’s single-use food ware by championing a reusable culture. To learn more, visit: [reusablesanmateocounty.org](https://reusablesanmateocounty.org).
- For no cost technical assistance, contact Recology at [GreenYourBiz@Recology.com](mailto:GreenYourBiz@Recology.com) or call (650) 595-3900.



# COMPOST COLLECTION IS NOW REQUIRED

## EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SB 1383

### What is Senate Bill 1383?

Senate Bill 1383 (SB 1383) is legislation enacted by the State of California that builds upon the state's leading commitments to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution** statewide.

It requires all residents and businesses to divert organic materials (including: food scraps, plant trimmings, and food/beverage soiled paper products) from the landfill. Regulations are in effect as of January 1st, 2022.



### Why does it matter?

California is experiencing a climate crisis: record breaking temperatures, longer fire seasons, extreme droughts, and rising sea levels. SB 1383 mandates will:

REDUCE  
METHANE  
EMISSIONS  
FROM  
LANDFILLS

RECOVER  
EDIBLE FOOD  
FOR HUNGRY  
PEOPLE

STORE  
CARBON IN  
THE SOIL VIA  
COMPOST

### What does this mean for me?

Effective January 1, 2022, residents and businesses are now required to compost organic materials on site or through their green Recology compost bin.



FOOD/BEVERAGE SOILED PAPER

PLANT TRIMMINGS

FOOD SCRAPS

THESE  
ITEMS CAN  
BE PLACED IN  
YOUR GREEN  
BIN



RethinkWaste or Recology may be in your neighborhood throughout the year assessing your carts/bins. We are only looking for proper sorting and may leave outreach on your carts/bins with helpful tips and information on how to sort properly. Contact us with questions.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

[CalRecycle.ca.gov/Climate/SLCP](https://CalRecycle.ca.gov/Climate/SLCP)  
[RethinkWaste.org/SB1383](https://RethinkWaste.org/SB1383)  
[SB1383@RethinkWaste.org](mailto:SB1383@RethinkWaste.org)

