

Dear Recycle Lady



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Dear Recycle Lady,

Are wine corks recyclable or compostable? Wine Connoisseur

Dear Wine Connoisseur,

Whether or not your wine corks are recyclable or compostable depends on what kind of corks you have. If your wine corks are plastic or aluminum, they are neither compostable nor recyclable locally. Natural corks aren't recyclable locally either, but they are compostable. Just throw them in your compost bin. Did you know that natural cork, for wine corks, is harvested every nine years by shaving bark from mature cork oak trees? No harm is done to the trees, and they can live for up to 300 years! There are organizations that recycle plastic and natural corks. ReCork America (<https://recork.com/us/locations>) is the largest cork recycler in North America. Drop off locations are available on their website. They have recycled over 100 million natural corks and made them into products such as shoes and yoga blocks. TerraCycle (www.terracycle.com) is another organization that recycles wine corks. They accept both plastic, and natural corks. Also, the Cork Forest Conservation Alliance has drop-boxes for corks at many locations, including Whole Foods.

Dear Recycle Lady,

Are balloons safe for the environment? Party Giver

Dear Party Giver,

Balloons are essentially a single-use product, whether they are made of plastic, rubber, nylon, or latex. Some early balloons were made of dried animal bladders. Balloons made of latex are supposedly biodegradable and thus eco-friendly, but they take six months to four years to fully break down. Plastic helium balloons take even longer. According to Tree Hugger, bright colored balloons tend to attract wildlife, birds, and other animals that will sometimes mistake them for food, leading to obstructions in their gastrointestinal tracts. Strings from the balloons also can wrap around their bodies. Many ideas exist for party decorations that are not single-use products. Reusable fabric water balloons are available for those that must have balloons for a party! Recyclable or compostable steamers and garlands are available through online websites. Party supplies and reusable decorations are often available at thrift stores, as well as regular retail stores.

Dear Recycle Lady,

How do you safely dispose of home COVID-19 test kits? Thankfully Negative

Dear Thankfully Negative,

Good question. In West Virginia, home tests can be thrown in normal trash. According to <https://environment.govt.nz> any COVID-19 virus from the kit is inactivated by the solution used. Just be sure to place everything in the disposal bag provided with the kit. Delaware, South Carolina, and California consider home tests a biohazard that must be treated as medical waste.

Good News: Beautiful Monarch butterflies have been added to the endangered species list as their population has declined between 85% and 95% since the 1990s. According to Emma Pelton of the nonprofit Xerces Society that monitors butterflies, butterflies are imperiled by loss of habitat and increased use of herbicides and pesticides for agriculture, as well as climate change. Let's hope, that with protection, the number of Monarch butterflies begins to increase.

Have questions about recycling, or interesting information about recycling? Send questions or requests to recyclelady@greenbrier-swa.com. Dear Recycle Lady is sponsored jointly by the Greenbrier Recycling Center and Greenworks Recycling.