



# 2015 Foodcycler Survey Results

August 2015

# Overview

In August of 2015, Waste Management sent an email survey to 5,440 King and Snohomish county WUTC customers who have previously taken the Foodcycling pledge and remain interested in receiving ongoing compost information from Waste Management.

The goal of the survey was to find out:

- If Foodcyclers are still composting and if they know proper composting techniques.
- How the current program is working and what information they are seeking.
- If there are additional tools that would motivate them to do more at home.



 **King County**

**ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THE FOODCYCLING PLEDGE?**

Did you know that nearly 60% of all garbage sent to the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill is food scraps, yard debris and food-soiled compostable paper?

**Now's your chance to do something about it!**

**Take the Foodcycling Pledge**

When you put your food scraps, food-soiled paper and yard debris in your curbside compost cart, you help close the local Foodcycling loop. By foodcycling, your food scraps and yard debris are delivered to an area compost facility, processed into compost, then sold regionally at home and garden stores and used by local farms.

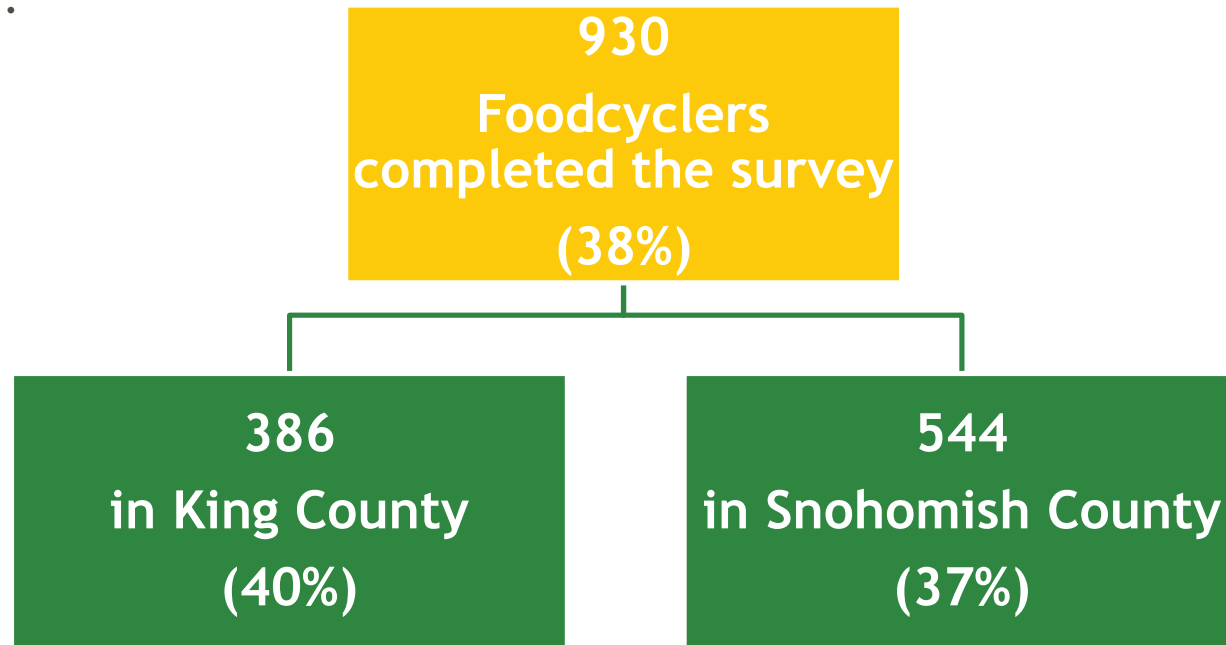


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# Survey Participation

The Foodcyclers were sent an e-mail with an invitation to participate in the survey on July 23, 2015. As an incentive, one lucky participant received a \$150 gift card to Fred Meyer.

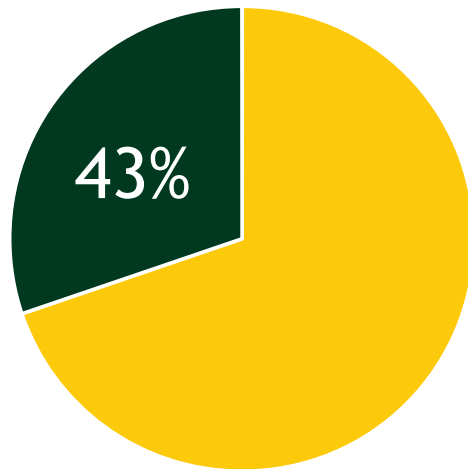
- The e-blast had a 44% average open rate, 120% more than the standard open rate of 20%.
- Of the 2,419 Foodcyclers who opened the email, 930 completed the survey.



# Receiving the container increases engagement

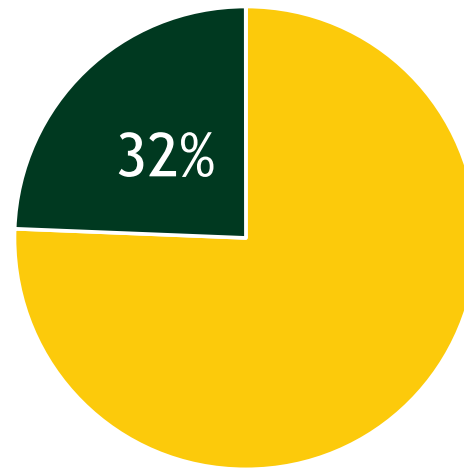
- Participants who received a free kitchen compost container through various outreach tactics over the last two years were sent one version of the survey.
- Those who have not received a container, due to limited supply, were sent a link to a slightly modified survey.
- Having a container increased Foodcycler participation in the survey by 34%.

Received Container



■ Took Survey

No Container



■ Took Survey



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# Key Findings

- Most of the people who received a container report they are still using it today, daily or multiple times per day.
- Even those who have not received a free container still report they are composting daily.
- The majority of those polled prefer to use compostable bags with their containers, however, many remarked that they are too expensive and asked for incentives and coupons.
- The Produce Sticker Trading Card has been enormously successful in spreading awareness about a confusing item - almost all of those polled knew they are not compostable.
- People are willing to seek out information about confusing items and most turn to WM resources - either the Guidelines or website.
- Through the majority of Foodcyclers find the email helpful, they offered great suggestions on topics that they are interested in hearing more about. An unusual amount reported they aren't receiving the email though it is sent to the same list that the survey was sent to.
- Direct mail is the preferred form of communication, other than email, for the majority of participants.
- We are moving people to advocacy with our work - large numbers are telling friends and family.
- When asked what more WM can do, the majority of people asked for more information and incentives on composting. Most of those who haven't received a container yet, asked for a free container.



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# Survey Results for Foodcyclers who received a container



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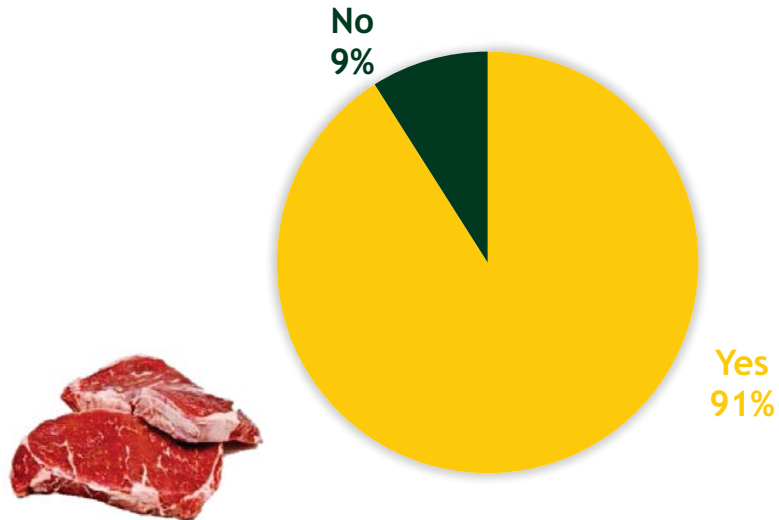
# Do you still have the kitchen compost container provided by Waste Management?



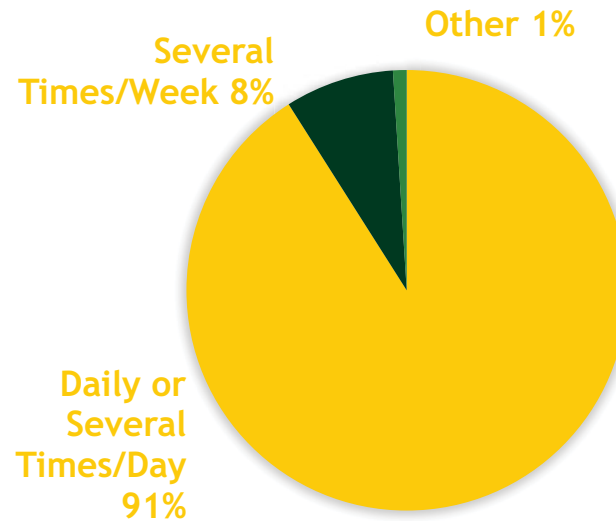
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## Are you still using your kitchen compost container?



## How often do you use it?

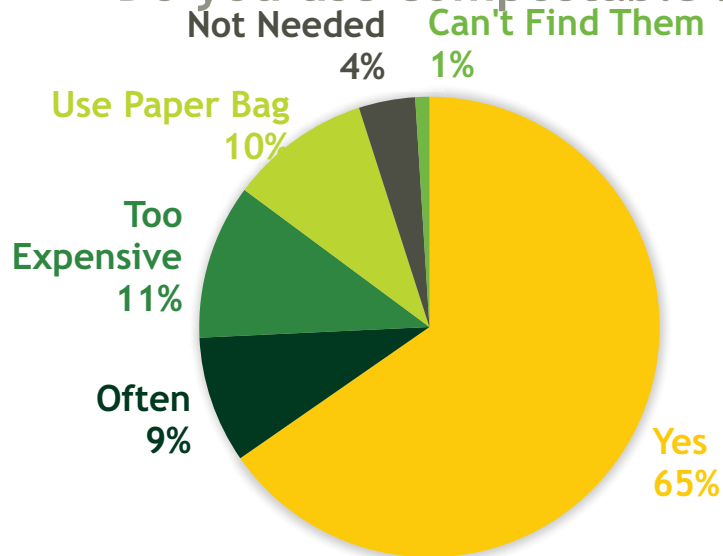


*“Every day, for all food prep & scraps after eating.”*

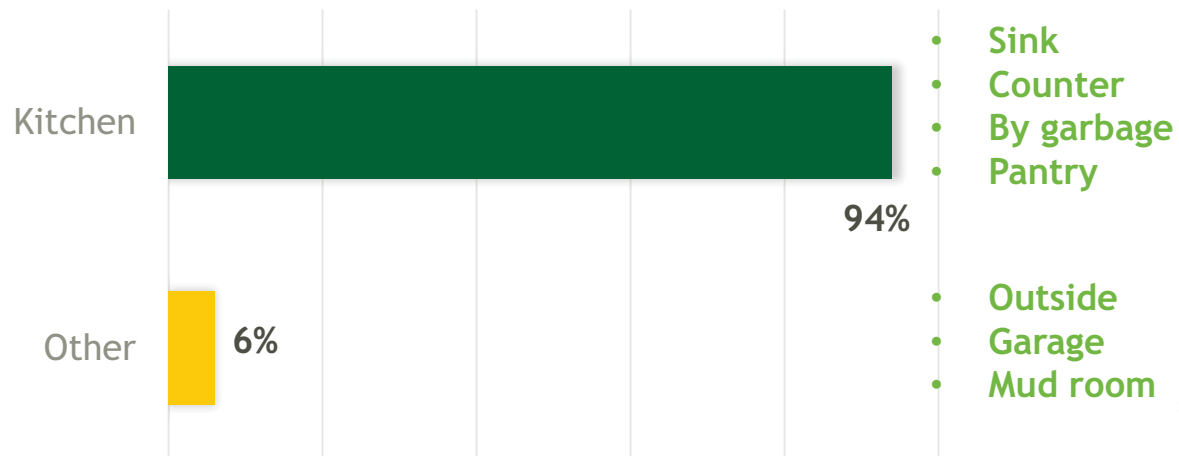
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## Do you use compostable bags?



## Where do you keep your container?



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# What do you do with your food scraps when the kitchen container is full?

- 96% Empty it into the yard waste container  
(Terms used: bin, container, can, cart)
- 2% Freeze until collection day
- 1% Compost in the Yard
- 1% Empty it (no location specified)



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# 66 customers no longer have the container...

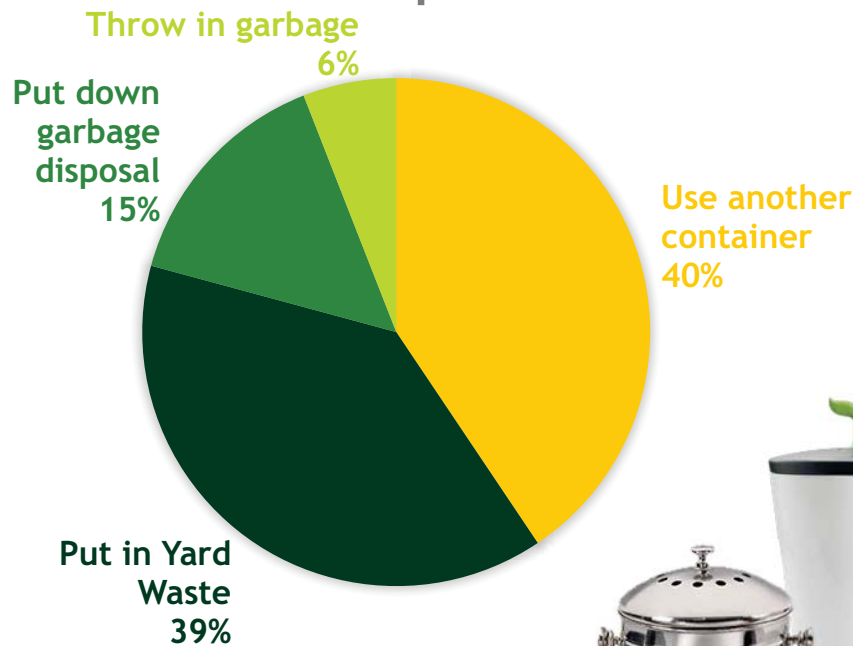
## Why not?

- Use another container
- It broke
- Never received it
- No room for it in kitchen
- Prefer a smaller container
- Gave it away

## What did you do with it?

- Gave it away
- Recycled it
- Donated it

## What do you do with your food scraps?



*"We have a kitchen compost container that we purchased"*

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# Is there anything that would make you more likely to start using your container?

- 43% Use or prefer another container
- 16% Prefer a smaller container
- 14% Need a way to avoid smell and fruit flies
- 10% Compostable bags
- 8% Prefer a larger container
- 5% Better lid
- 4% Other



*“I use a container that matches my kitchen.”*

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# Did receiving the container make a difference in your motivation to compost?

- 61% Yes
  - “Yes, 100%!”
  - “Yes, and I have less garbage now that I know I can put food items in the yard waste.”
  - “Yes, while I wanted to compost; the container keeps it top of mind for me.”
  - “Yes. It raised my awareness of how easy it is to get in the habit of sorting food from trash.”
  - “Absolutely! It's raised awareness for everyone who comes to my home.”
- 21% No, I was already composting
  - “Not really. I already composted, but I had a smaller container, so this one is more convenient.”
  - “No, I already composted food scraps, but I like this one more than my previous container.”
- 18% No

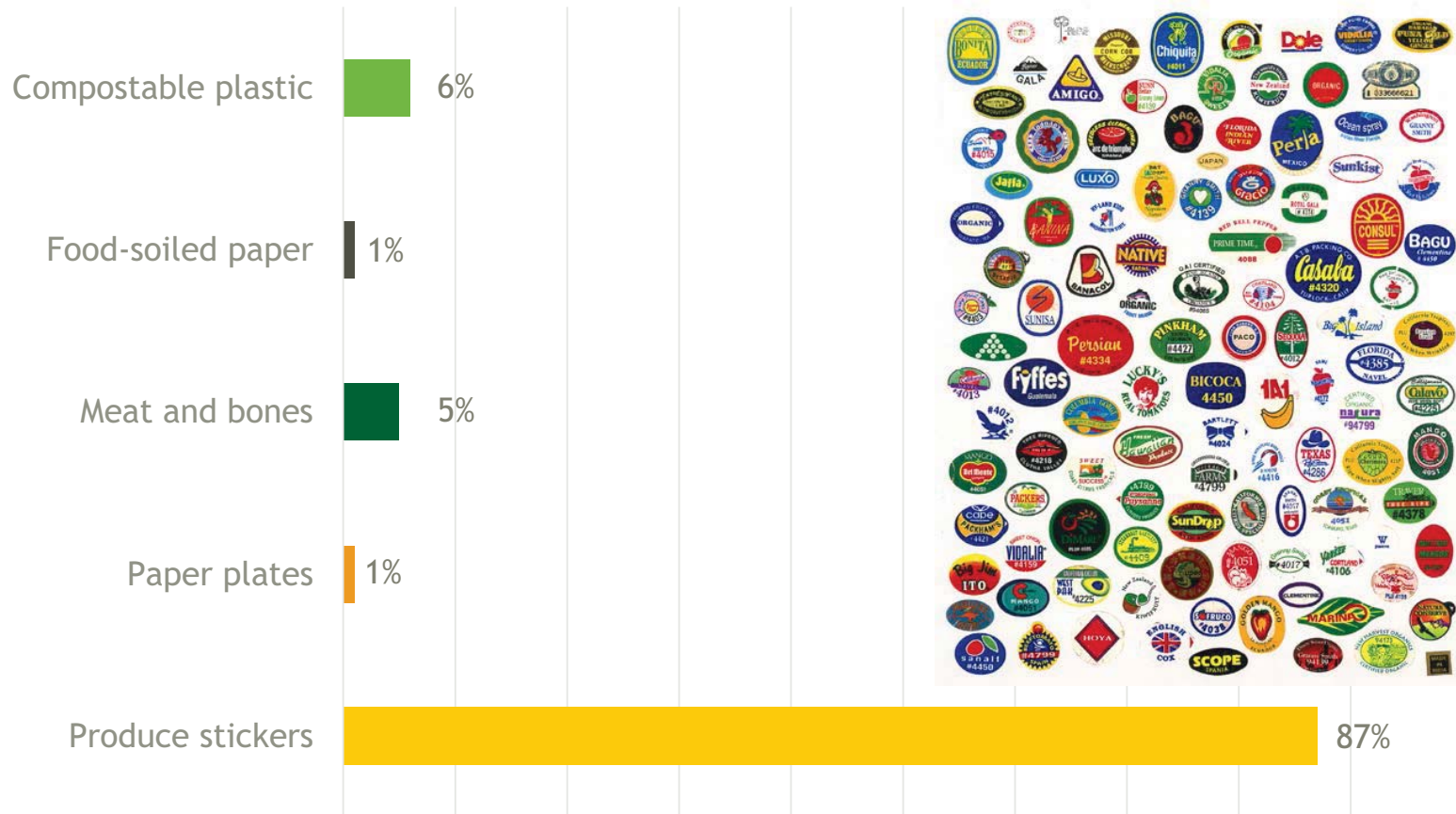
Is there anything that's making it difficult to use your compost container?

- Bags - expensive, tear, leak, doesn't stay in the container
- A different container design
- Smell
- Fruit flies
- Bad lid design



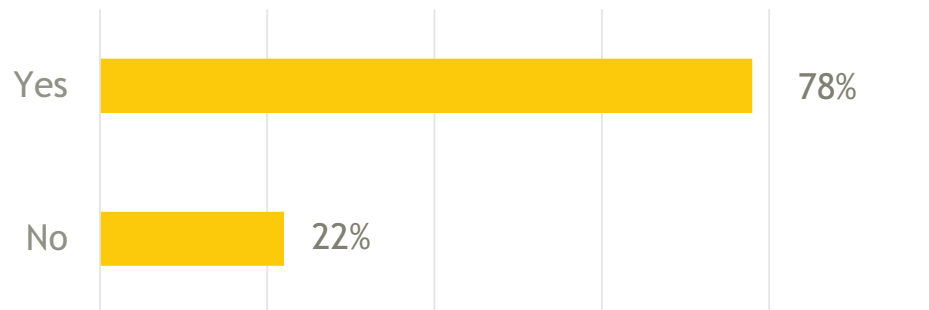
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# Which of the following items cannot be composted?

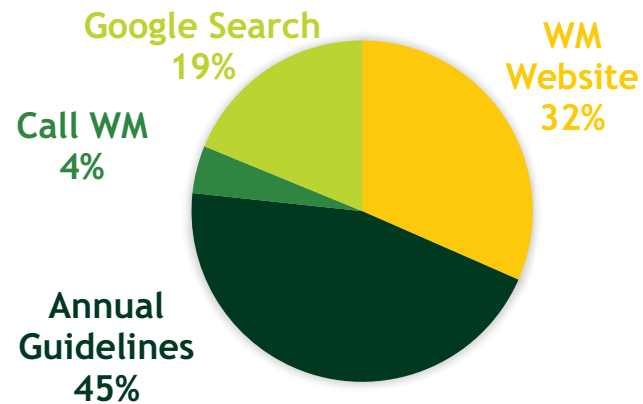




When you are confused about whether you can place a particular item in the compost container, do you seek out more information?



Where do you go to get information?



What do you do with the confusing item?

7% Other

- Not confused
- Compost it anyway
- Recycle it



70%  
Throw it away



23%  
Set it aside,  
Research,  
Check Guidelines

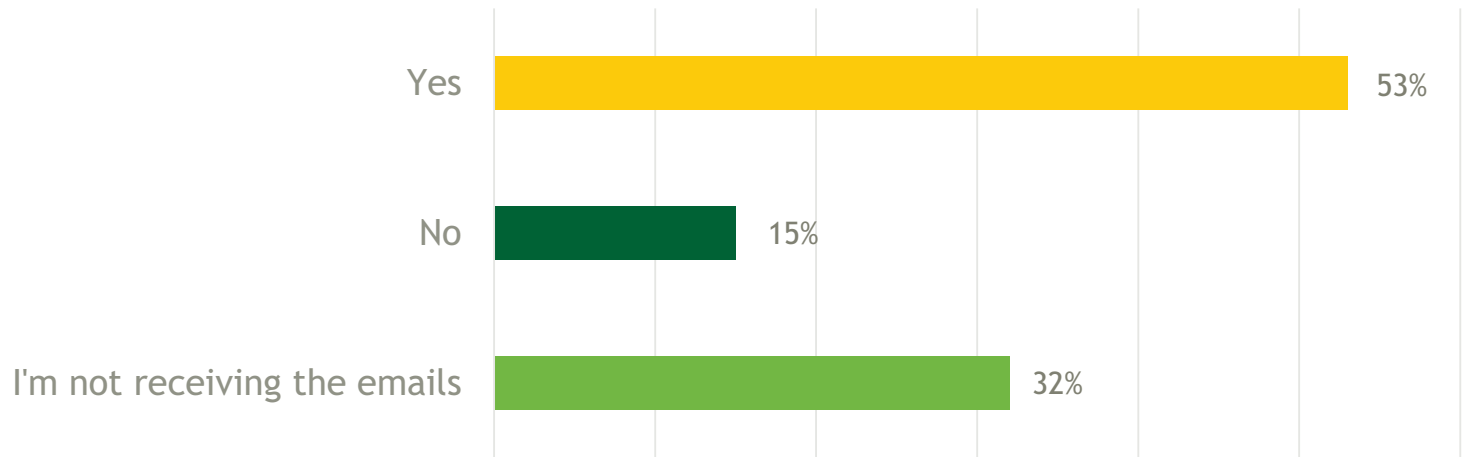


*"If in doubt, we throw it out."*

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## Have the Foodcycler emails been helpful to you?



What, if any, information in the Foodcycler emails did you find particularly helpful or interesting?

- **Reminders about what to compost, not just what not to do**
  - *"Discovering things that are compostable that you might not normally think of."*
- **The trading card, not to put produce stickers in compost**
  - *"Did not know stickers were not compostable."*
- **Controlling smell and mess**
  - *"The May 12, 2015 edition which shared tips for controlling odors and messes for indoor and outdoor compost containers."*



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# What new information have you learned about curbside composting since participating in the Foodcycling program?

- 30% Many people learned about what can go in the yard waste bin, other than the yard waste:
  - 20 people mentioned not knowing meat and bones were compostable
  - 23 people mentioned food-soiled paper and pizza boxes
  - 12% learned that produce stickers not compostable
- 55% Other:
  - Every little bit counts, good and bad
  - We can cut down our garbage waste a lot
  - That is can be easy
  - **Negative:** The garbage collectors, WM customer support, and your web site tell different stories. Need to provide customers with consistent information.
- 15% Can't think of anything

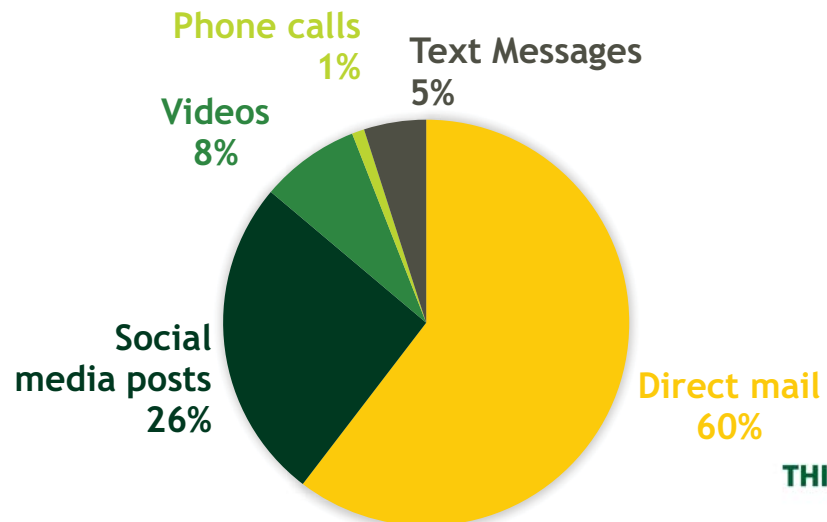


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## What suggestions do you have for the type of information you'd like to see in the Foodcycler emails?

- Lots of reminders of how to sort garbage, recyclables and compost.
- List particular items that can be composted
- What happens to the waste? Where does it go? How much compost is generated from one cart?
- When the food scrap collection started did it change the way the composting was done?
- Tips to involve kids
- More tips on how to compost right
- Have a program that rewards residents who compost
- More contests and community events
- Recycling information

## What other types of communication would you like to receive?



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# Have you told friends and/or family about your experience composting?

- **68% Yes**

- “They observe what we do. When hosting a dinner party, we place the opened, cleaned container in the sink. Guest willingly scape their plate into the container.”
- “Yes, I try to encourage family and friends to compost if I see that they aren't. I even encourage small business owners to consider getting a yard waste bin for compostables like paper towels.”
- “Yes!!!! And we have gotten a few friends and family members to start doing it.”
- “Yes and many wish their waste companies would offer this program.”

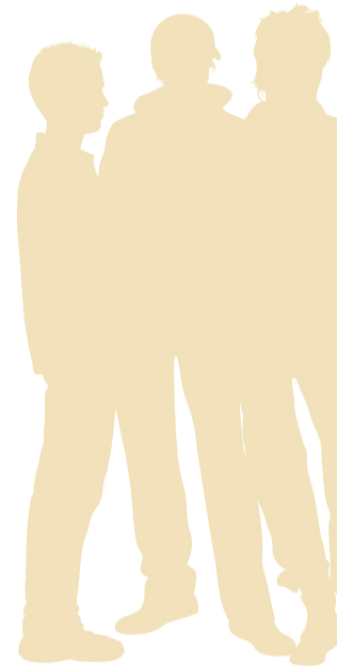
## Of the friends and family you have told, have any started composting?

- **46% Yes**

- “Yes, I got my mom to compost!”
- “Friends don't let friends avoid social and environmental responsibilities.”
- “Yes, there were a few who were really excited to learn we had this option in Snohomish county.”

- **9.8% No**

- “No, they already are composting.”
- “They don't allow it where they live.”



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# Is there anything Waste Management can provide to make composting easier?

- Offer discounts or coupons for compostable bags
- Different container design
- More incentives like the Produce Sticker Trading Card
- More education about why composting is important
- A video on how to compost
- More information on the composting process
- Offer a backyard compost system



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# Survey Results for Foodcyclers who have not received a container



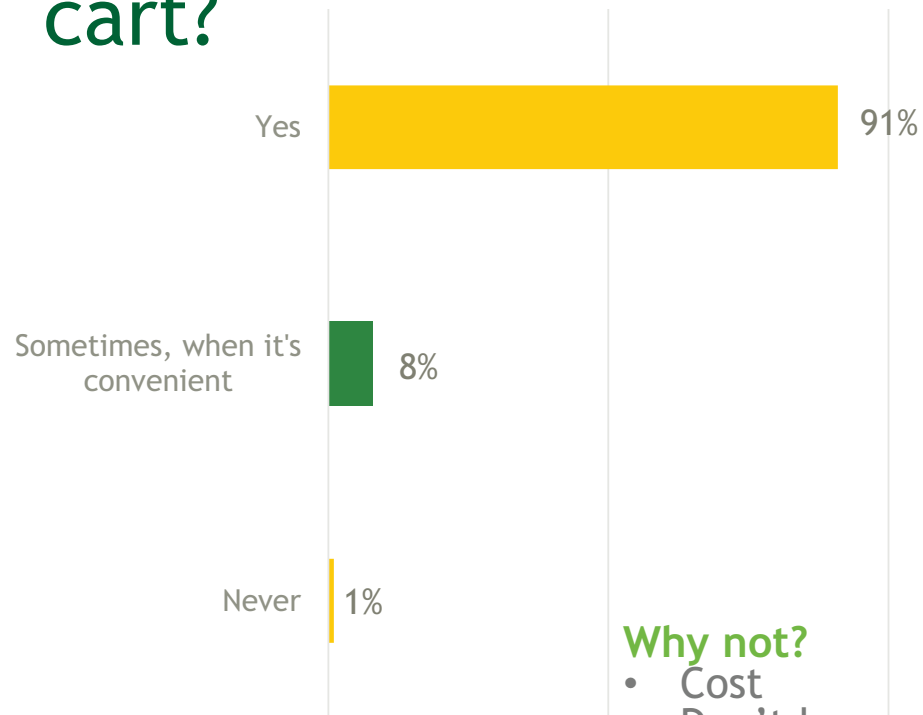
**Foodcyclers Unite!**

**Thank you for taking the Foodcycler Pledge.  
You have joined a community of neighbors  
who do not like to see anything go to waste!**



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# Are you currently adding your food scraps and/or your food-soiled paper (napkins, pizza boxes) to your curbside compost cart?



## Why not?

- Cost
- Don't have a container
- Not sure how to avoid smell and bugs



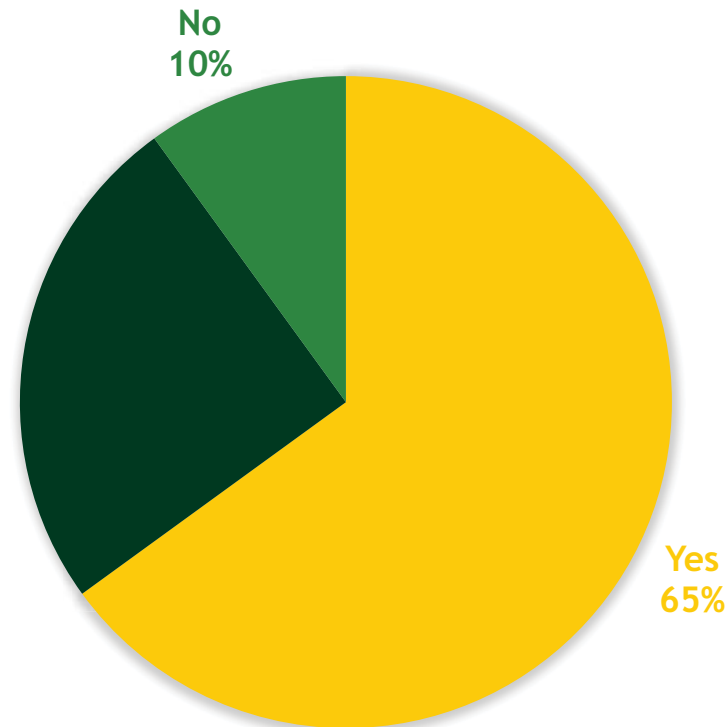
# Do you currently have a kitchen compost container or other system inside your kitchen to collect food scraps and food soiled paper?

## Examples:

- A small bucket
- A bowl
- Paper bags
- Tupperware
- Stainless bowl
- Cardboard box
- Garbage can
- Coffee can

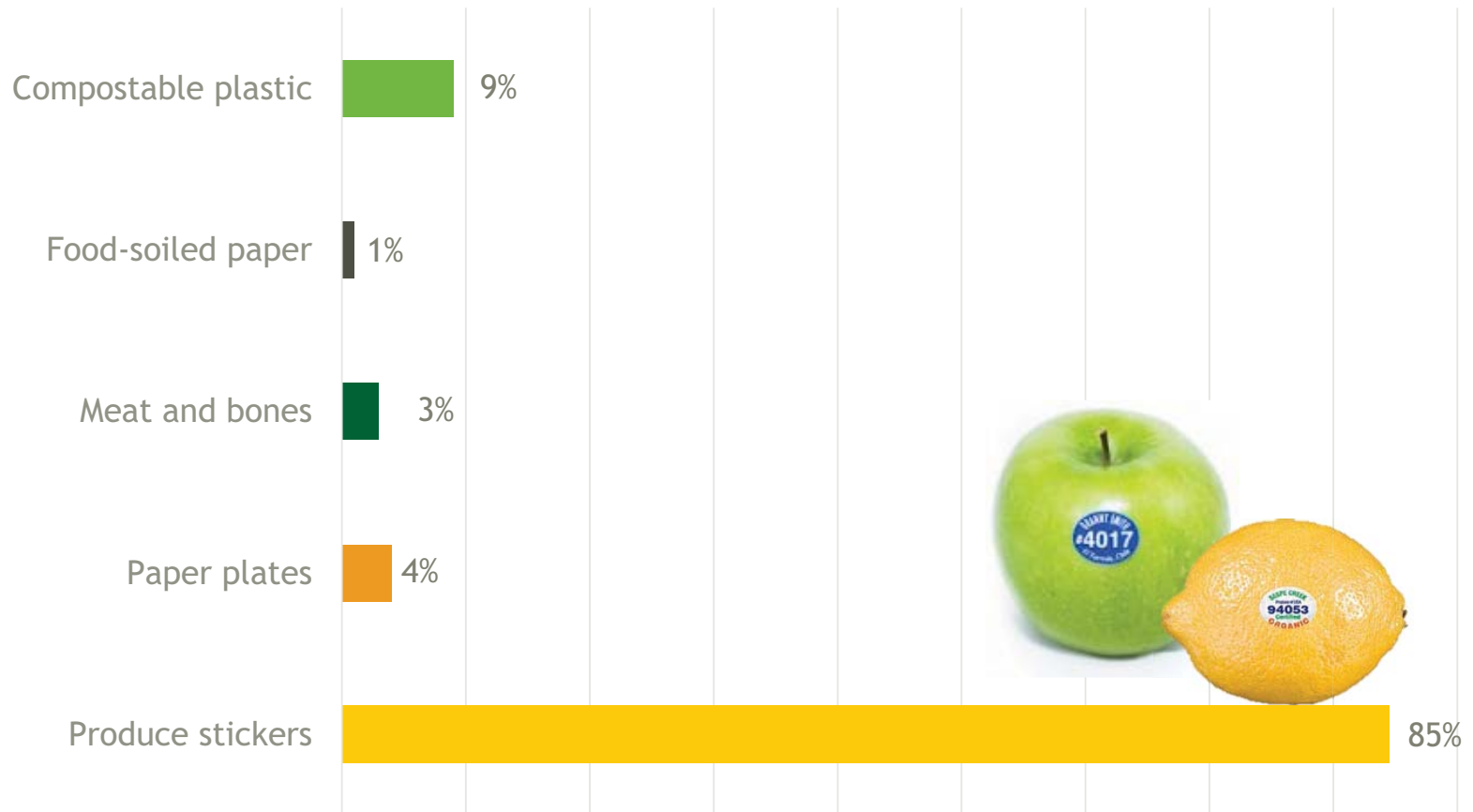


Yes, I created  
my own  
25%

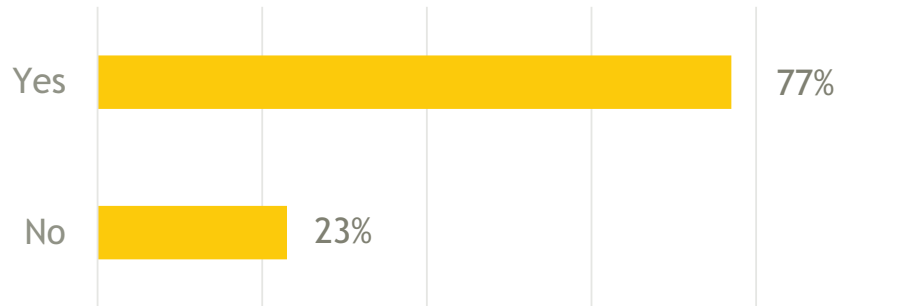


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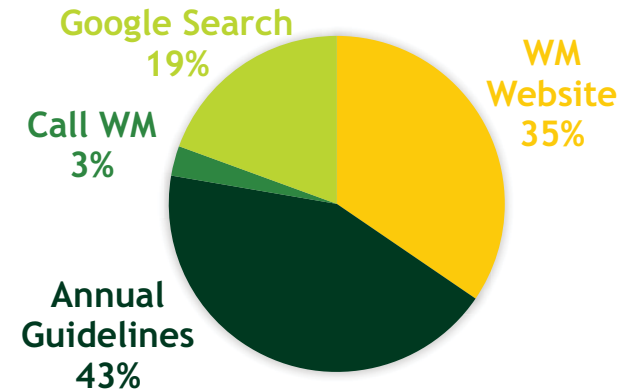
# Which of the following items cannot be composted?



When you are confused about whether you can place a particular item in the compost container, do you seek out more information?



Where do you go to get information?



What do you do with the confusing item?

2% Other

- Not confused
- Compost it anyway
- Recycle it



77%  
Throw it away



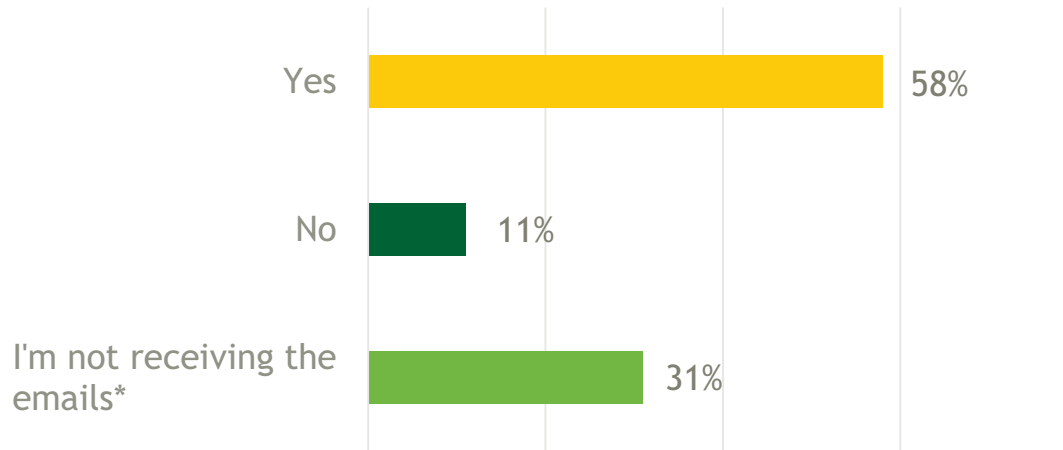
21%  
Set it aside,  
Research,  
Check Guidelines



*"If I can't find an answer, I put it on the garbage."*

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## Have the Foodcycler emails been helpful to you?



*"I never knew there was a composting community out there!"*

## What, if any, information in the Foodcycler emails did you find particularly helpful or interesting?

20% All of it!

- "Just the general nature of the emails and keeping us up to date on any news."
- "There's always interesting facts."

15% Produce Stickers aren't compostable

- "The notification on the produce stickers was very useful. I changed our habits as a consequence."
- "I was usually good about removing stickers but now I'm adamant about it. I also shared it with friends so people stop adding the stickers to the compost."

Other

- "I didn't know I could include pizza delivery boxes!"
- "Seasonal reminders are helpful - like the one around Thanksgiving."
- "General tips and reminders about what is compostable."



\*57 Foodcyclers gave an alternate email address

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# What new information have you learned about curbside composting since participating in the Foodcycling program?

- 68% mentioned learning about items that can be composted - what can go in the yard waste bin, other than the yard waste:
  - 37 learned that produce stickers not compostable
  - 26 people mentioned food-soiled paper and pizza boxes
  - 7 people mentioned not knowing meat and bones were compostable
  - 4 people learned shredded paper can go in the compost.
- 12% Other:
  - We can cut down our garbage waste a lot
  - Using newspaper to line the compost bin
  - How important it is to put the right things in.
- 10% Can't think of anything



## PRODUCE STICKER TRADING CARD

Remove produce stickers and place on this trading card.  
Once card is full, trade in for a FREE bag of Cedar Grove compost!  
Trading post locations are on the back.



Compost O' Natural ©2014 Waste Management of Washington, Inc.

WMCompostO' Natural 2014-1-5

## Have a Scrap Happy Thanksgiving!



It's estimated that between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, more than 1 million tons of additional waste is generated each week nationwide.

Let's roll up our sleeves and get *Scrap Happy* this holiday to help festive food scraps and leftovers become compost!

### Scrap Happy Thanksgiving Tips...

- **Compost your food scraps.** Make sure to toss your Thanksgiving food scraps, paper napkins and unwanted leftovers into your curbside compost cart - even that turkey carcass can get composted! Remember, all of your food scraps will become nutrient-rich compost for gardens and local farms.
- **Recycle used cooking oil.** When the cooking oil cools, put it in an empty container with a screw-on lid and take it to a cooking oil collection station. Local biofuel companies turn your old grease into fuel for buses!

[Map to the Snohomish County Solid Waste drop off location](#)

[Map to King County General BioDiesel public recycling station locations](#)



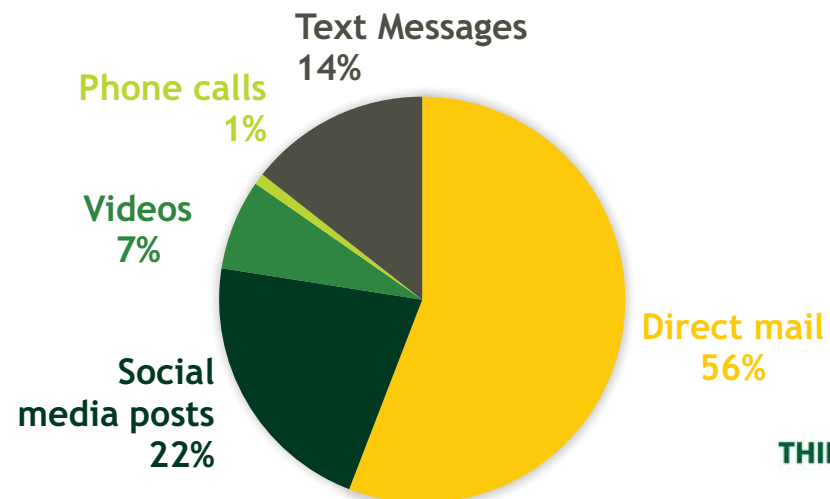
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## What suggestions do you have for the type of information you'd like to see in the Foodcycler emails?

- More tips on how to compost right and help with confusing items, use pictures
- Tips to involve kids
- Tips on reducing waste
- Fun quizzes and drawings
- Statistics like how much compost is diverted from the landfill in our community
- More incentives like the Produce Sticker card and coupons for compostable bags
- What items are the “worst offenders” and why?
- More info on recycling plastics, etc.



## What other types of communication would you like to receive?



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# Have you told friends and/or family about your experience composting?

- 72% Yes

- “Yes, my other mom friends and I talk about composting and recycling”
- “Yes. My kids' school is a Green School. So we are always informing each other of changes or concerns.”
- “All the time, however in this house with boys, it goes on deaf ears...I need something that would help??”
- “Yes. Even got my sister to start.”
- “Oh yes....everyone knows about my composting. When we have a family gathering, I tell everyone to just leave dishes and food on the kitchen counter for me to sort out.”

- 28% No

## Of the friends and family you have told, have any started composting?

- 63% Yes

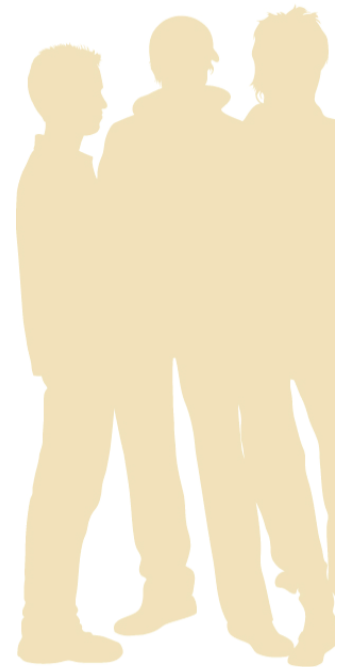
- “Yes, I got my mom to compost!”
- “Friends don't let friends avoid social and environmental responsibilities.”
- “Yes, there were a few who were really excited to learn we had this option in Snohomish county.”

- 23% No

- “It's not available where they live.”
- “Unfortunately, they won't even give it a try but I tell them all the time.”

- 12% They were already composting

- 2% Other



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# Is there anything Waste Management can provide to make composting easier?

- Give out more kitchen compost containers
- More frequent emails about composting
- A more complete list of compostable items with photos and information on confusing items, maybe a large fridge magnet
- Curbside cart is too large, gets dirty
- Coupons for compostable bags
- Offer a backyard compost system



*“Thank you for your efforts, Waste Management!”*

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# Appendix



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# Appendix E-Blast

## Take the 2015 Foodcycler Survey for a chance to win \$150

### Hello Foodcyclers!



It's that time of the year ... the time when we ask for your feedback. Below is a link to the 2015 Foodcycling Survey. We appreciate your willingness to participate and we will use your answers to help Waste Management improve its Foodcycling program to bring you the composting information you are most interested in and more of the tips and tricks you love. Our goal is to glean insights into how the Foodcycler program has impacted your composting habits and how it can be improved to better meet your needs. **In exchange for your**

**answers to our short survey by August 6th, we will reward one lucky Foodcycler with a \$150 gift card to Fred Meyer. Simply follow the link below.**

But before you go, we'd like to let you know that Candy Castellanos has taken another position and is no longer with Waste Management. We wish her well and thank her for helping to build the Foodcycler community!

As your new Public Education and Outreach Team, we would like to thank you for being a Foodcycler and it is our hope that, with the information from this survey, we can continue to bring you helpful tools to make curbside composting an easy part of your daily routine.

Now...go for it!

[Click on through to the 2015 Foodcycling Survey](#)

Happy Summer!

Joel Kohlstedt, Diana Meeks and Michelle Metzler



 SafeUnsubscribe™

This email was sent to [mloctor@cplusc.com](mailto:mloctor@cplusc.com) by [kcfoodcycler@cplusc.com](mailto:kcfoodcycler@cplusc.com) | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Rapid removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).



Waste Management | 720 4th Ave, Suite 400 | Kirkland | WA | 98033

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# Appendix

## Survey Introduction



### 2015 Foodcycler Survey

Hello Foodcycler!

Thanks for taking the 2015 Waste Management Foodcycler survey today!

We appreciate your time and your thoughtful answers to the survey by August 6th. Your responses will help us to plan for the future, relay important information to you and make sure we are meeting your needs. We're so happy to have you as part of this community. Thanks for being a Foodcycler!

Your Waste Management Team,  
Joel Kohlstedt, Diana Meeks and Michelle Metzler



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# Appendix

## Survey for those who received a container

Do you still have the kitchen compost container provided by WM?

- Yes
  - Are you still using it?
  - How often?
  - Do you use compostable bags?
  - Where do you keep your container?
  - What do you do with food scraps when your kitchen container is full?
- No
  - Why not?
  - What did you do with it?
  - What do you do with your food scraps?
  - Is there anything that would make you more likely to start using your container?
- Did receiving the container make a difference in your motivation to compost?
- Is there anything that's making it difficult to use your compost container?
- Which of the following items cannot be composted?
- When you are confused about whether you can place a particular item in the compost container, do you seek out more information?
- Where do you go to get information?
- What do you do with the confusing item?
- Have the Foodcycler emails been helpful to you?
- What, if any, information in the Foodcycler emails did you find particularly helpful or interesting?
- What new information have you learned about curbside composting since participating in the Foodcycling program?
- What suggestions do you have for the type of information you'd like to see in the Foodcycler emails?
- What other types of communication would you like to receive?
- Have you told friends and/or family about your experience composting?
- Of the friends and family you have told, have any started composting?
- Is there anything Waste Management can provide to make composting easier?



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# Appendix

## Survey for those who have not received a container

- Are you currently adding your food scraps and/or your food-soiled paper (napkins, pizza boxes) to your curbside compost cart?
  - Yes
  - No
    - Why not?
- Do you currently have a kitchen compost container or other system inside your kitchen to collect food scraps and food soiled paper?
- Which of the following items cannot be composted?
- When you are confused about whether you can place a particular item in the compost container, do you seek out more information?
- Where do you go to get information?
- What do you do with the confusing item?
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- Is there anything Waste Management can provide to make composting easier?



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