

Recycling Used Greenhouse/Nursery Plastics
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Greenhouse and Nursery business generate a significant quantity of plastics each year. The opportunity to recycle plastics has changed over the past few years due primarily to high oil prices which translate into more value for recycled plastics.

Increasingly, greenhouse and nursery firms will be asked to be more sustainable businesses. Part of the sustainable production philosophy is to recycle used poly film, pots, flats, plug trays, etc. The following information can help you develop recycling within your business. If done correctly there is financial payment back to you as opposed to costing you money for disposal fees.

What are the buyers concerns? Most often plastic buyers/brokers give three reasons why they do not want to take recycled greenhouse/nursery plastics.

- The quantity of plastic is small
- Plastic types are mixed together
- Plastics are dirty or have chemical residues

What can you do to start a recycling program for your used plastics?

Tip#1: Know your plastics and keep them separate. Most plastics don't mix when they're melted during recycling. Mixed types are worthless to a buyer, and they will be rejected immediately. If you don't know the type plastics, ask your supplier. Keep good records on what plastic type is used at which location at your greenhouse or nursery.

Tip#2: Keep all plastics clean...very clean! Storing plastics is different than storing items that can tolerate some dirt. You have to "clean up your act" if you want to market your plastic wastes. Doing your part to assure a clean product will put money in your pocket and prevent a disposal problem. Remember:

- No moisture – dry bales only
- No mud, sod, or soil. Store bales indoors off the floor.
- No trash, such as weeds, organic matter, rags, or tape
- No loose paper, corrugated cardboard, or paperboard inside bales
- No wood or broken pallet pieces
- No polystyrene (Styrofoam) or polyurethane foam (foam rubber)
- No oil or grease
- No steel banding, twine, or rope. Plastic banding preferred.

Tip#3: Develop a market. On the next page are those companies in which have expressed some interest in accepting certain types of plastics from the horticultural sector. Recycling is market-driven, and many of these companies will change their addresses or policies routinely. Call them to determine their current terms for accepting deliveries. You may also want to send a sample of the material. Notice that some pay shipping costs, some pay for the plastic itself, and some may not pay at all. When in doubt, send a sample.

Guide to Plastic Recyclers Listed Below

Common plastic resins accepted

PE=polyethylene

LDPE=low density polyethylene, #4, film is very quiet when shaken

LLDPE=linear low density polyethylene, called “stretch film”, very thin

HDPE=high density polyethylene, #2, film is very noisy when shaken

PVC=polyvinyl chloride (called vinyl), #3, usually in rigid pipes

PP=polypropylene, #5, feels like nylon, somewhat fibrous

PET=polyethylene terephthalate, #1, mainly soda bottles, rare in ag

PS=polystyrene, #6, turns white when creased, soluble in gasoline

HIPS=high impact polystyrene

PC=polycarbonate, usually clear and very tough

ABS=acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene, often called Plexiglas

Types of plastics used for various horticultural products

Row covers – Usually polyolefin, PP (#5) or polyester, sometimes LLDPE

Greenhouse film – Usually LDPE (#4)

Nursery pots – Usually PP (#5), PS (#6), or HDPE (#2)

Greenhouse/Nursery trays or flats – Usually PS (#6), sometimes PP (#5)

Trickle irrigation tubing – LDPE (#4)

This information is for educational purposes only. References to commercial companies do not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. Reprinting this information verbatim can be made with credit to Michigan State University. Reprinting cannot be used to endorse or advertise a commercial company.

Name: Jeff Arens

Address: 200 N. Franklin, Zeeland, MI 49464

Phone: (616) 204-1209

Email: none

Fax: (616) 892-5221

Contact Person: Jeff Arens

Plastics Accepted: LDPE #4

Quantity Accepted: Any

Contamination Allowed: None

Shipping Paid by: Jeff Arens

Payment for Plastic: None

Name: Mondo Polymer Technologies

Address: 27620 State Route 7, Reno, OH 45773

Phone: (740) 376-9396

Email: ron@mondopolymer.com

Fax: (740) 376-9960

Contact Person: Ronnie Wesel

Plastics Accepted: PE

Quantity Accepted: Any

Contamination Allowed: Trace

Shipping Paid by: Mondo

Payment for Plastic: Negotiable

Name: Bata Plastics

Address: 1001 40th Street, S.E. Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Phone: (616) 452-5300

Email: leehammond@bataplastics.com

Fax: (616) 452-5301

Contact Person: Matt Bertotti

Plastics Accepted: All types

Quantity Accepted: All quantities

Contamination Allowed: None

Shipping Paid by: Bata Plastics

Payment for Plastic: Depends on material

Name: Louis Padnos

Address: P.O. Box 1979, Holland, MI 49422

Phone: (616) 396-6521

Email: ben.westdorp@padnos.com

Fax: (616) 396-7789

Contact Person: Ben Westdorp

Plastics Accepted: All plastics (Also all forms of paper, cardboard)

Quantity Accepted: Negotiable

Shipping Paid by: Negotiable

Payment for Plastic: Yes

Contamination: Negotiable

Name: EcoQuest LLC

Address: 13650 172nd Ave., Grand Haven, MI 49417

Phone: (616) 296-0767

Email: carey.boote@gmail.com

Fax: (616) 296-0796

Contact Person: Carey J. Boote, David Dykstra

Plastics Accepted: PP PET PS HIPS PC ABS Pots, Trays

Quantity Accepted: 1000 lbs minimum delivery

Contamination Allowed: Light dirt, dust, no loose materials

Shipping Paid by: Negotiable

Payment for Plastic: Yes, typically-dependent on qty & type