



# FOOD SCRAP RECYCLING PROGRAM

Town of Darien, CT

# Background

Approximately  
22% of Municipal  
Solid Waste is  
food  
(EPA estimate)

Source separated  
food can be  
recycled into a  
useful product  
(compost)

Awarded \$8,460  
Innovation Grant  
from RecycleCT  
Foundation


Program  
launched mid-  
October 2018



# Program Objective

- ❖ Reduce the amount of waste sent to and incinerated at Wheelabrator Bridgeport
- ❖ Increase community awareness of, and reinforce community commitment to, recycling and sustainability





# Program Design:

- ❖ Drop-off at Darien Recycling Center, with food scraps hauled to a commercial composting facility
- ❖ All food waste accepted
- ❖ Accessible to any resident with a current Recycling Center permit (no extra charge)
- ❖ Sign-up not required
- ❖ Food scrap collection kits acquired by the Town and sold to residents at cost (but not required)
- ❖ Compostable bags accepted
- ❖ Annual compost “giveaway” to demonstrate benefit of recycling food waste



# Food Scrap Kits

- 2-gallon kitchen collection bin
  - 6-gallon storage/transport bin
  - 1 roll compostable bags
  - Food Scrap Recycling Guide
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- ❖ Purchased in bulk by Town and sold to residents at cost.
  - ❖ Sold through DPW Office (Town Hall) and by volunteers at Recycling Center and at events sponsored by local groups (Pollinator Pathway, Darien Garden Club and Darien Nature Center).



# Food Scrap Recycling Guide

## Why Recycle Food Scraps?

Food scraps are one of the largest components of trash sent to landfills and incinerators. However, food scraps are not trash, they are a resource that can be turned into useful compost.

Recycling food scraps into compost captures their nutrients and energy and returns them to the environment. When food scraps are sent to a landfill or incinerator this resource is lost. In addition, food scraps inside landfills create methane, a greenhouse gas with a stronger warming effect than carbon dioxide. When hauled to an incinerator (as we do in Connecticut), food scraps reduce the efficiency of the incinerator because they are wet and heavy and therefore do not burn well.

Composting is a far better way to manage food scraps! Instead of wasting energy burning food or creating methane from landfilling it, composting food scraps yields a useful and valuable product that gives back to our nutrient life cycle, resulting in cleaner soil, water and air.

## What Is Compost?

Compost is decomposed organic matter that has many beneficial uses, including improving soil health. When you purchase a bag of potting soil or observe your landscaper putting down "dirt," that is compost.

Compost benefits our landscape by maximizing plant growth, preventing soil erosion and mitigating the frequency of water, fertilizer and pesticide use.

By recycling your food scraps you are reducing waste and creating compost - a double win!

**THANK YOU for participating in Darien's Food Scrap Recycling Program!**

For updates, follow *Darien Recycling Center* on Facebook and *@DarienRecycles* on Twitter!

## Town of Darien Food Scrap Recycling Guide



Darien Advisory Committee  
on Sustainability



## Food Scrap Recycling: It's Easy!

### Here's How To Do It:

1. **COLLECT** food scraps in a kitchen collection container. Although not required, you may line it with a compostable or paper bag - *please no plastic bags*. Store container in a convenient location (on counter, under sink, in cabinet drawer, etc.).



2. Most residents will fill the kitchen collection container with food scraps 3-4 times per week. Therefore it is suggested that residents also have a larger bin to **TRANSFER** food scraps into for weekly storage. This larger bin can also be used to transport food scraps to the Recycling Center. Anything that holds approximately 5-6 gallons and has a lid will work. It is recommended that food storage bins be kept indoors - either in the house or in the garage.



3. **BRING** your transportation bin to the Food Scrap Recycling drop-off at the Recycling Center to dispose of food scraps as often as needed.

**All material collected is brought to a commercial composting facility where it is turned into compost.**

### Drop-off Location and Hours:

The Food Scrap Recycling drop-off bins are located at the Darien Recycling & Refuse Center (**126 Ledge Road**) and are accessible during Recycling Center hours of operation (**Monday-Saturday 7am-2:45 pm**). There is no charge to drop off food scraps, but you must have a current Recycling Center permit (sticker) to enter the facility.

### Accepted Items:

- ALL FOOD, including:
  - Fruits and Vegetables (remove stickers, bands, ties)
  - Meat and Poultry (bones ok)
  - Fish and Shellfish (shells ok)
  - Dairy Products
  - Bread and Pasta
  - Rice and Grains
  - Egg Shells
  - Chips and Snacks
  - Nuts and Seeds
  - Leftover, Spoiled and Expired Food (cooked ok)
- Coffee Grounds (paper filters ok)
- Tea Bags (no staples)
- Cut Flowers
- Compostable Bags (no plastic bags)

**A successful program depends on you!** Items not on the "accepted" list are contaminants and are never allowed in the bins. Examples:

- No plastic bags, plastic packaging or wrappers. Use only compostable bags, paper bags or no bags.
- No baby/hand/cleaning wipes.
- No pet waste.
- If unsure about an item, please email us before putting it in the bin: [recycle@darienct.gov](mailto:recycle@darienct.gov)

### Starter Kits and Compostable Bags:

Starter kits can be purchased through the Department of Public Works office (Town Hall, 2 Renshaw Road) for \$25 (**cash, or checks payable to Town of Darien**). Kits include one 2-gallon kitchen collection container, one 6-gallon storage & transportation bin, and one roll of compostable bags. Additional compostable bags are available for purchase (25 bags for \$2/roll). *If purchased elsewhere, bags must have an ASTM D6400 rating!*

**QUESTIONS? Email**  
[recycle@darienct.gov](mailto:recycle@darienct.gov)

This is a folded document; on left is the front and back (green); on right is inside





# Food Scrap Drop-Off

- ❖ Signage makes clear what is accepted
- ❖ 32-gallon bins are leased from hauler (Curbside Compost)
- ❖ Odors minimized by having only 3-4 bins out at one time; when filled they are moved away from drop-off and replaced with empty bins



# DARIEN RECYCLES FOOD SCRAPS!



Collect. Bring. Drop.

Because What You've Got is Not Waste.

[recycle@darienct.gov](mailto:recycle@darienct.gov)







# Compost Giveaway

- ❖ Purchased 20 cubic yards, spring 2019
- ❖ Not held in 2020 due to Covid-19

# Results



300+ kits have been purchased to date; many residents participate without having purchased a kit



Currently diverting approximately one ton of food waste per week

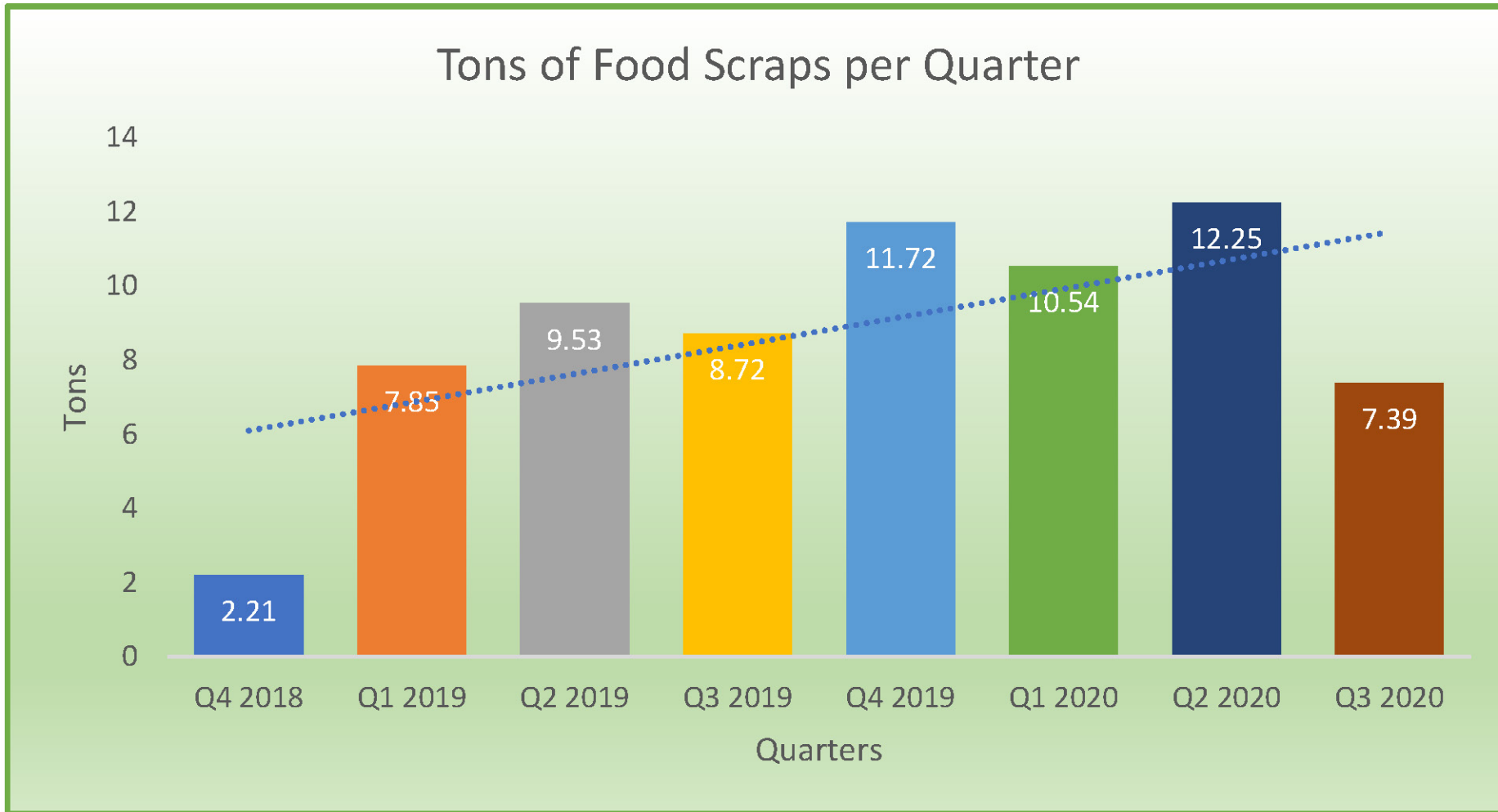


Issues with contamination are minimal



Similar programs established in several neighboring communities, including Greenwich, Norwalk, Rowayton, Westport, New Canaan (launches October 2020)





Current diversion rate approximately one ton per week (Note: Q3 2020 represents only 2 months).



# Contamination

- ❖ Periodic inquiries to hauler
- ❖ Social media posts used to educate residents on what not to put in drop-off.



# Challenges

Hauling Costs

Growth inhibited by significant percentage of residents who employ private haulers who rarely, if ever, visit Recycling Center.

Ongoing education needed to highlight benefits of food diversion, and to minimize contamination and program attrition

Infrastructure: 32-gallon bins not ideal for scaling up program; no hose/drain at drop-off

<b>Startup Expenses (one-time)</b>			
Signage at Drop-off Site		1	\$ 400
Banner		1	\$ 60
Darien Sidewalks Sales (Registration Fee)		1	\$ 150
<b>Total Startup Expenses</b>			\$ 610

<b>Operating Expenses (annual)</b>			
Pickup and Hauling	Weekly (Bi-Weekly during Summer 2019)		
City Carting Admin fees	Weekly		
<b>Total Hauling/Admin Fees for first year</b>		\$	8,101
<b>Total Hauling/Admin Fees for second year</b>		\$	7,649

<b>Reimbursed Outlays (Items purchased by Town in bulk and sold to residents at cost)</b>			
Starter Kits: Countertop Pail	\$	200	\$ 1,150
Starter Kits: Storage/Transport Bin	\$	215	\$ 2,720
Starter Kits: Guide	\$	300	\$ 165
Starter Kits: Educational Stickers	\$	1,000	\$ 323
Compostable Bags (3 gallon)	\$	800	\$ 1,158
<b>Total Reimbursed Outlays</b>			\$ 5,516



# Summary



Diverting food waste is increasingly important as Connecticut seeks ways to manage municipal solid waste

Program is well-liked by participants; positive feedback: "It's easier than I thought it would be," "Doing this makes me feel good."

Importance of good program design: do what has worked elsewhere; ongoing education



# **DARIEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABILITY**

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