

The Gainesville Zero Waste News

Life After Cartons

It was announced several months ago that **food and beverage cartons are no longer accepted in the curbside recycling programs of Gainesville and Alachua County**. Since then, several of you have asked why not, what's being done about it, and what substitutes are available.



“Why did you stop recycling cartons?”

Generally speaking, packaging made of mixed materials is always harder to recycle. While a wine bottle is made only of glass, and a soda can is made of aluminum, a carton is made by combining paper, plastic, and foil. It's a real headache for recyclers!

Years of continued attempts to find domestic markets capable of processing these mixed material containers were ultimately unsuccessful, so it became clear that **cartons must be disposed of in the garbage**.

“What's being done to make things more recyclable?”

New Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation is being discussed in several US states. If passed, it would ensure that more products could be sold in packaging with environmentally responsible manufacturing and domestic reuse, repair, or recycling outlets.

“How to get my yummy products without buying wasteful cartons?”

To avoid packaging altogether, many of these products sold in cartons – such as juices, plant milks, and coffee creamers – can be made at home. In addition to reducing unnecessary waste, you can also avoid all the added sugar, emulsifiers, thickeners, and preservatives that come with factory-processed foodstuffs.

While **gable-top, Tetra Pak, and wine and juice boxes are no longer accepted for recycling in the Gainesville/Alachua County curbside program**, maybe life is better – for recyclers and our health – after cartons.

For information on what materials are accepted for recycling, visit gainesvillefl.gov/WhatCanBeRecycled, or follow us on social media – @ZeroWasteGNV on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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