



CITY OF
EAST GRAND RAPIDS
750 LAKESIDE DRIVE SE-EAST GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49506



Yard Waste/Food Scraps Composting Service FAQ

Effective April 6, 2026, the weekly curbside yard waste service provided by the Department of Public Works will also accept certain food scrap items. In order to better understand the service enhancements, please review the following FAQs:

- 1) Will my weekly route/day change?

No. The Monday through Friday routes are not changing.

- 2) What food scraps items can I put out for composting with my yard waste?

Items such as fruits, vegetables, pits, pels, nuts/shells, bread, grains, pasta, rice, coffee grounds, and other natural vegetation materials as noted in Regulation #3.b. Please do not place BPI certified or other “compostable” plastic like products with your materials.

- 3) Have yard waste items changed?

No, yard waste items remain the same. Please see Regulation #3.a.

- 4) What if I want to compost other items like meat, fish, dairy, pizza boxes, etc.?

These items, also noted in Regulation #4, can be composted at the city food scraps compost drop-off site at the Department of Public Works Complex, 2310 Reeds Lake Blvd. The drop off site will be open 24/7/365 to accommodate those who want to compost additional items that are not accepted via the curbside service.

- 5) Won't food scraps items smell bad or attract some wildlife like raccoons?

Items deposited at the drop off site are secured to handle composting items that are more typically associated with smells and attracting animals. The current site has been operational since 2022, and no odor or animal issues have occurred. For curbside items, because this is a weekly curbside service, food scrap items should be in the beginning composting stage, not an advanced stage. If breads, grains, pasta, and rice were to be composted by yourself in your yard, it is possible that they could

have some odor and attract some wildlife. Because the city will pick up these items in their early composting stages, material will be out of the city at compost facility within several days. If you remain concerned, please feel free to utilize the drop off site location provided and only compost other items accepted that you are comfortable with.

Other Tips to help with odor from yard waste or food scraps:

- **If you use a small bucket and have a freezer with capacity, you can keep and add scraps to your food in the freezer up until the day before pickup day.**
- **Many residents keep their refuse containers outside of their homes/garages and secure them with bungee straps, lid locks, etc. to keep wildlife out. If you are concerned with wildlife getting into your composting container, it is recommended to utilize the same strategies that work well for general refuse.**
- **Sprinkle baking soda in compost containers.**
- **Store compost container in the shade during warm weather.**
- **Drain as much liquid as possible from food scraps before adding them to compost.**
- **Layer food scraps in between yard trimmings.**
- **Spray inside of compost cart with a vinegar and water solution.**

6) How much does the service cost and how do I pay for it?

The service is covered within the city's general operating millage, which covers yard waste and the added food scraps service.

7) Do I have to participate?

No. It is provided weekly, but residents can pick and choose to participate in compliant yard waste, food scraps, both, or neither service on your pickup day.

8) What happens to yard waste and curbside composting after it is collected?

Material is dropped off at the Department of Public Works transfer station and loaded into sealed roll of dumpster containers. As material comes in it is transferred to a larger scale composting facility in West Michigan where it is composted. Compost is sold by the vendor as natural fertilizer to area farms, landscapers, and the general community. The Department of Public Works also utilizes compost material for some utility or construction restorations.

When organic material goes to landfills, it decomposes, producing methane (a greenhouse gas). Converting your food scraps and yard waste to fertilizer and reused soil reduces greenhouse gasses and benefits environmental sustainability.

- 9) Do I need a special container, or do I need to purchase one from the city?

No. Regulations pertaining to containers are largely unchanged. The full set of regulations that pertain to the service are noted under regulation #5 in the rules/regulations. Those not familiar with composting food scraps may consider buckets with lids, typically 5-gallon containers. Because these buckets are less than 32 gallons, designed to be lifted, and less than 40 pounds, they are compliant. Material can be added to your existing yard waste containers, like 32-gallon containers with handles, or added to paper yard waste bags. It is recommended that material added to paper yard waste bags be added from a primary bucket container the day before your pickup to mitigate any moisture content with the paper bags.

- 10) Are service times related to curbside service, loose leaf pickup, holiday tree/wreath pickup changing?

No. These services remain in place as they have for many years in accordance with Regulation #8. Since curbside service ends at the conclusion of the first full week of December, so will food scraps service. Residents interested in continuing to compost food scraps may do so during the winter months at the community food scraps drop off site at the Department of Public Works, 2310 Reeds Lake Blvd until service resumes Monday the first full week of April in the spring.

- 11) Sometimes weather conditions occur outside of seasonal norms. Why can't the Department of Public Works do special pick-ups during these times?

Seasonal changes do not occur on a planned schedule. In Michigan, one day can be 70 degrees and wonderful, followed by a snow and ice storm with 20-degree temperatures. Equipment and staffing schedules are in-place for current seasons. During winter months, special shifts are staffed and trucks and equipment maintained for winter weather responses. Changing equipment and staffing schedules for one or two days is not practical. Additionally, one or two days of unseasonal weather does not allow for complete the entire city.

- 12) I like to clean up my yard during brief warmer weather stretched during winter and early spring. What can I do with my containers or paper bags?

Great news. The amended policy allows the Director of Public Works to provide a designated location in the Department of Public Works Parking lot at 2310 Reeds Lake Blvd where resident can drop off compliant material during service lapses. Please call the Department of Public Work operations 616-940-4870 to inquire.

13) Why didn't my container or paper bags get picked up?

Department of Public Works crews will tag items that are not compliant with approved rules and regulations and highlight what the non-compliant issue is with a copy of the rules and regulations. The most common violations are related to containers being larger than 32-gallons, weighing more than 40 pounds, not designed to be lifted or in damaged condition. Department of Public Works crews pick up containers from 4,000 EGR properties each week. It is important to understand these regulations specific to containers are in place for worker health and safety. Containers and material that were tagged and not picked up will be picked up the following week. Continued violations may result in a civil infraction citation.

Examples of Compliant Containers-Below

