



Home Organics Management

Food Waste Pre-Treatment Appliances (Electric Food Recyclers)

Smaller household appliances that process food waste into dried and ground material are known either as pre-treatment appliances or electric food recyclers. These appliances are not composters as they do produce a finished product that qualifies as compost. Instead, they dry and grind food waste in a material that can be used as a feedstock for backyard composters, mixed into soil (in proper ratios), or dropped off at select organic waste disposal facilities in the RDCK. There are a few benefits to these units that may make them a good fit for certain households, but they do not create compost by themselves. Any appliance that claims to be a “composter” or produce compost should be carefully chosen.



How Electric Food Recyclers Work

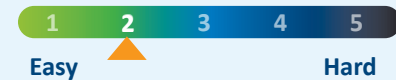
Most food recycling appliances use a combination of heat and mechanical grinding action to create a dried and shelf stable output that might have a mild odour and resemble very dry soil. However, this material is simply dried and ground food waste; it has not decomposed at all and still needs to be broken down by microbes before nutrients are available to plants and soil organisms for healthy growth.

The electrical demands of these appliances range from 0.5 to 1.5kWh per cycle, which can cost between \$2-\$10/month depending on your electricity rates. These appliances often reduce the weight and volume of food waste by up to 90%.

What goes in an Electric Food Recycler?

Most appliances can accept a wide range of food scraps. Each appliance may have a different accepted materials list, so review before adding. Generally, cooked food, grains, meat, small bones, along with fruit and vegetable scraps, including pits and seeds can all go in.

Effort Scale



Use of the appliance is very easy. Some maintenance and troubleshooting is required. Further processing or disposal at RDCK facilities will increase total effort.

Cost Scale



These appliances are generally quite expensive. Ranging from \$300 to \$800+. Look for additional discounts or promo codes when selecting your appliance.

Tip at RDCK Organics Disposal Facilities:

Certain RDCK facilities accept separate organic waste; tipping fees may apply. The output is classified as organic waste, and can be disposed of at the following sites during regular operating hours:

- Ootischenia Landfill
- Grohman Narrows Transfer Station
- Central (Salmo) Transfer Station
- Creston Landfill



Photo credit: Food Cycler Science

RDCK Recommendations: Electric Food Recycler Outputs

Different manufacturers may make claims about what to do with the output of these appliances. These claims or recommendations may differ from what is described in this factsheet. It is important to consider each appliance, how you plan to use the output, and the claims of the manufacturer when selecting this tool for management of your organic waste. Be sure to consider wildlife.

Backyard Composting:

To manage the output from these appliances on site, composting in a backyard composter is a great option. The output will be high in nitrogen and should be treated as a “greens” with a high density of nutrients. Therefore, it is important to add enough “browns” to balance the compost and mix well at every application. You will also need to add water and maintain proper moisture to rehydrate the material and start decomposition. See the Backyard Composting Factsheet for more information on how to properly use these systems. High-surface area carbon sources are preferred, such as sawdust or straw, as the output risks clumping and forming anaerobic pockets without adequate mixing and proper selection of “browns”.

Digging into soil:

Depending on the season and circumstance, the output can be dug into garden soil at a ratio of 15 parts soil to 1 part output (15:1). When properly applied, the output can be used as a fertilizer but requires a minimum of 2 weeks after application before it is safe for planting. Ensure the output is thoroughly mixed using a pitchfork or shovel and add water to begin the decomposition process.



Food Recyclers and Wildlife

One of the primary benefits of electric food recyclers is their ability to produce a shelf-stable output that can be more easily managed to prevent wildlife and pests from accessing this waste.

However, the output should be considered an animal attractant and needs to be kept in a secure location in a sealed container between adding to a composter, digging it into soil, or taking it to an RDCK facility for disposal.

A 5-gallon (23 liter) bucket with a tight-fitting lid works well for storage.

Improper application of the output to soils or composters will create an attractant, do not “sprinkle” the output on top of soils, or leave the dried material accessible to animals at any time. Also ensure the appliances are placed in a secure indoor location that stays above freezing. Never use or store an appliance outdoors or in extreme temperature conditions (below 0°C, above 35°C).



Learn more at rdck.ca/organics