

Garbage and Recycling – Avoiding Maggots

Maggots are a common, naturally occurring problem with many municipal garbage collection agencies. Maggots are commonly found in residents' garbage bags and containers, even if tightly sealed. While maggots cannot be guaranteed to be totally eliminated, there are preventive measures that can be used to reduce the likelihood of them occurring.

Maggots are fly larvae and occur when flies lay eggs on organic waste. They typically have a 7-day life cycle with fluctuations depending on temperatures and other conditions such as moisture. Maggots are more common in warmer temperatures. To prevent maggots from occurring we have to prevent mature flies from laying eggs in the blue cart by eliminating odors and reducing their access to the blue cart.

Avoid maggots in your blue cart by:

- Freezing your meat scraps until your pick up day.
- Putting some weather stripping along the top of your blue bin where the lid rests. Weather stripping is a long strip of foam that seals air gaps in your doors and windows. It can be found at most hardware stores.
- Putting a layer of yard waste on top of your food scraps.
- Rinsing your blue bin with a mild detergent and water. For those hard-to-reach spots at the bottom of your blue bin consider using an old broom.

If you end up with maggots in your blue bin, try getting rid of them by:

- Opening the lid to allow the birds to eat the maggots.
- Spraying the top and inside with vinegar.

Blue Cart

- Flies are attracted to your blue cart by the odor of rotting food. Sanitation is important to reduce the odor. Your blue cart should be cleaned regularly using a solution of borax and water or vinegar and water. Alternatively, mild soaps can be used to clean your blue cart. Please ensure no cleaning solution is left in the cart for collection. Wash and rinse your cart over a landscaped area such as a lawn or shrubbery, not near gutters or storm drains as they may flow directly into local creeks and waterways. Be sure your blue cart is dry before use.
- Remove all residual liquid from the bottom of your cart after collection to detract flies.
- Odors can also be eliminated using locally available deodorizers as *Green Bin Deodorizer*. Try sprinkling your vinegar or baking soda as well to eliminate odors.
- Store your cart in a well-ventilated area.

- Cover your blue cart with black plastic sheeting such as a garbage bag during the summer months to trap heat and reduce fly survival. Flies are most active at average temperatures of 68 - 77 °F and become undetectable above 113 °F and below 50 °F.

Food Preparation

- Flies are particularly attracted by protein sources, like meat and bones. Try waiting until the night before collection before placing these items in your blue cart.
- Drain as much liquid as possible from the organic waste.
- If space permits, freeze meat/fruit/vegetable organic waste until the night before collection when it would be placed into the blue cart for collection.
- When cleaning out your refrigerator, try waiting until the day before your collection, rather than the day after.

Storage

- The longer your organic waste remains in the blue cart, the longer the flies have the opportunity to breed in it. Put your blue cart out for collection every week, even if isn't full.
- Flies are not readily attracted to blue carts if wet and rotting foods are not exposed. Try alternating layers of yard waste on top of kitchen waste.
- Certain odors will repel flies such as pennyroyal, camphor, eucalyptus, mint, or bay. Try hanging some bruised leaves of these herbs in clusters or applying dabs of herbal oil to the outside of your blue cart.
- Line the outer rim of the blue cart with salt or vinegar to prevent flies from entering container. Sprinkle rock salt or lime inside the cart as a further preventative measure.

If you have discovered maggots in your blue cart, try the following measures to control them, and then clean your cart thoroughly after the next collection day. Be sure to leave no residue in the bottom of the cart and ensure it is dry before use.

- Cover the maggots with lime, salt, or vinegar.
- Diatomaceous Earth is a natural fossil product that kills maggots, slugs, etc. Check garden centers and nurseries for availability.