

Colours of Rubbish and Recycling Bins

Until October 2015, councils and businesses in New Zealand had used a variety of colours to indicate what items can be recycled in what bins. This created confusion when colours were used inconsistently and increased the likelihood of contamination. In October 2015 WasteMINZ, the Glass Packaging Forum and councils around New Zealand agreed on a standardised set of colours for mobile recycling and rubbish bins, crates and internal office bins. Then in 2016 the New Zealand Recycling Symbols (formerly known as the RONZ symbols) were updated to match the colours for mobile recycling and rubbish bins. Companies wishing to implement nationwide recycling schemes are strongly encouraged to use these colours both for their bins and also on their signage. This will ensure that the colours used are consistent with both public place recycling and household recycling.

What are the colours?

Material Type	Colour
Rubbish	Red
Commingled Recycling	Yellow
Food /Food and Compostable Packaging / Food and Garden combined	Lime Green
Garden only	Dark Green
Commingled Glass	Blue
Cans/ Metal/ Ewaste/Appliances	Black
Plastics / Polystyrene	Orange
Paper / Cardboard	Grey
Construction and Demolition	Brown

Reuse	Purple
Hazardous	Red triangle black font



For bin bodies:

For 240 litre and 120 litre wheelie bins, black or dark green should be used for the bin body. These colours maximise the amount of recycled content used in the production of the bins.

For bin lids, crates and internal office bins

- Red should be used for rubbish
- Yellow should be used for commingled recycling: (glass, plastic, metal and paper combined)
- Lime Green should be used for food waste and food waste /garden waste combined; noting that food waste only collections are strongly encouraged to use a smaller bin size than combined food and garden collections
- Dark Green should be used for garden waste
- Light Blue should be used for commingled glass collections (white, brown, green glass combined)
- Grey should be used for paper and cardboard recycling

For back of house bins supplied by waste and recycling companies

- Where possible mobile bin lids should use the relevant colours. Where it is not appropriate due to corporate branding requirements, signage of the relevant colour should be used to indicate what can be placed in the bin.

For skips

- Signage on the skips should use the colours outlined above.

A factsheet outlining which colours to use for rubbish and recycling bins can be downloaded [here](#).

Purchasing Bins

A list providing details of New Zealand suppliers of indoor and outdoor recycling bins and accessories can be found [here](#). The document is focused on the needs of commercial operations but could be applicable to households and schools. Inclusion in this document does not confer any preference or recommendation, suppliers are listed alphabetically.

Symbols

There are currently 51 different recycling symbols. The choice of symbol depends on how recycling is separated in your organisation.

- The symbols are in pdf format and can be downloaded either in portrait or horizontal layout [here](#) as a zipped file.
- An overview listing all the symbols can be downloaded [here](#).
- A factsheet outlining which PMS and CMYK colours are to be used can be downloaded [here](#).
- Background reading on why and how the bin colours were chosen can be viewed [here](#).
- Background reading on why and how the New Zealand Recycling Symbols were updated can be viewed [here](#).

For more information about the symbols and how to use them please email jenny@wasteminz.org.nz

Translation

The symbols have been translated into te reo Māori . WasteMINZ worked with Jacqui Forbes from [Para Kore](#) and Ian Christensen from [He Kupenga Hao i Te Reo Māori](#) to produce bilingual New Zealand Recycling Symbols.

The symbols can be downloaded [here](#) as a zipped folder. The symbols are available in both a portrait and landscape layout. They are editable so you are able to replace a kupu (word) if required, in consultation with your local iwi. The word list for the symbols can be downloaded [here](#). Organisations are encouraged to use the standard translations, unless there are regional or local differences.

Signage

Effective signage assists in minimising contamination in recycling bins and minimises recyclables ending up in the rubbish bin. A guidance document has been created showing examples of effective signage for events and outlining considerations to take into account when developing signage. View the factsheet [here](#).