

Master Gardeners Again Collect Polystyrene

Rebecca Miller-Cripps

Mark your calendars; for one day only, master gardeners will again collect #6 polystyrene foam on Saturday, March 23 from 9 am to 4 pm. Drop off your clean, label-and-tape-removed polystyrene on Microtronics Way next to the Waste Management, Inc. site just off Camage Avenue in the Tuolumne Road industrial park. Take Tuolumne Road and follow the signs.

As in prior collections, the recycler will accept only **CLEAN FOOD CONTAINERS** which we ask you to put into **CLEAR** plastic bags. **Packing grade** polystyrene (used for shipping and wrapping items such as electronics) may be put into **colored** plastic bags. All you have to do is load the material in your car or truck, drive on by, and Master Gardeners will help you unload.

How can you participate?

- Look for the #6 in the recyclable triangle label on the bottom of the material.
- Donate only clean packaging foam and rigid, white, foam insulation.
- **PLEASE remove all tape, labels, stickers, paint, cardboard and any other non-polystyrene materials.**
- Food containers need to be clean, with no food or grease residue.
- We cannot accept bubble wrap or packing peanuts.

Some packaging materials are now made from other kinds of foam. Only #6 expanded polystyrene foam can be reprocessed. For that reason, packing peanuts and other kinds of packaging materials, like bubble wrap, cannot be collected during the recycling event. Pac N Copy, in the Junction Shopping Center, will accept your packing peanuts and some other packaging materials.

Please don't toss this material into the trash – it's a disposal nightmare. The material collected will be trucked to a Lodi manufacturer that repurposes it into clean food containers.

Many cities, counties and other jurisdictions in California have banned the use of expanded polystyrene food containers. In addition, an organization called SOS—Save Our Shores—is working to protect our ocean from plastic pollution, <https://saveourshores.org/>. For more suggestions on ways to reduce the use of plastics, check out Californians against Waste at: <http://www.cawrecycles.org/> Also, just ahead of Earth Day on April 22, 2024, check out the many suggestions and articles about reducing waste at <https://earth911.com/>

If you cannot make it to the Saturday, 3/23 Polystyrene Collection Event, you can also bring it to the following facilities throughout the year:

- Dart Container Corporation, (209) 333-8088, 1400 E. Victor Road, in Lodi, accepts polystyrene 24 hours a day. Their drop-off bin is located close to Highway 12.
- Foam Fabricators, (209) 523-7002, 301 9th Street, Building B, in Modesto, (<http://www.foamfabricatorsinc.com/>) accepts expanded polystyrene Monday

through Thursday 7am through 3pm; Friday from 7am to 1pm. When you arrive at their facility, please call their phone number and someone will meet you at their gate to accept the expanded polystyrene.

Remember to save all that polystyrene packaging and bring it to the master gardener volunteers collecting it on March 23! We look forward to seeing you and thank you for again helping us keep this bulky material out of the landfill.

Rebecca Miller-Cripps is a University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardener of Tuolumne County.

UCCE Central Sierra Master Gardeners can answer home gardening questions. Call 209-533-5912 in Tuolumne County, 209-754-2880 in Calaveras County or fill out our [easy-to-use problem questionnaire](#) (<https://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=7269>). Check out our [UCCE Master Gardener webpage](#) (https://ucanr.edu/sites/MG_of_CS/). You can also find us on Facebook, on the radio at kaad-lp.org or 103.5 FM on Motherlode Community Radio and also on YouTube.