

Cork Recycling

Cork is derived from the bark of the cork oak tree, *Quercus suber*, which has grown in the western Mediterranean region for thousands of years, primarily in Portugal. Cork oak trees must be 25 years old before their first harvest. A further nine years must pass before another harvest can be made – this helps to ensure that cork is a sustainably harvested resource.

Cork oak trees provide valuable habitat for a wide variety of birds and wildlife. Cork oak forests are vital to maintaining the delicate ecosystems of the Mediterranean region. Various bird species, including the endangered Spanish Imperial Eagle, depend on the cork forests for their habitat.

Wine and champagne corks are collected from various drop-off points across Australia by community groups such as Girl Guides Australia, Friends of the Zoos and Green Collect in Melbourne, and MND (Motor Neuron Disease) Victoria. These groups recycle the corks to raise funds for their initiatives and programs.

Reducing waste

Cork is one of the few forms of packaging that is environmentally friendly. Unlike plastic corks, natural cork is renewable, fully recyclable, biodegradable and totally natural. None of the cork bark is wasted during the cork production process - the cork residue is granulated for other cork products and even the cork dust is used for fuel. The most important thing with cork, being a recyclable and valuable resource, is that it doesn't end up in landfill.

Why recycle corks?

By recycling cork stoppers, the useful life of the cork is extended. The material is diverted from landfill and can be used to manufacture a range of products such as floor tiles, gaskets and dart boards.

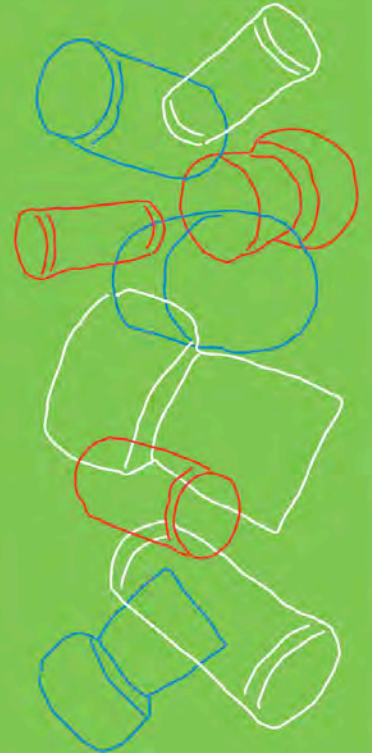
Recycling cork saves resources and reduces demand placed on cork plantations. Approximately 550 tonnes of cork is imported into Australia annually, of which less than 5% is



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How do you recycle computers, corks, cartridges and cans?

For information on council services and drop-off locations in your area... visit



RecyclingNearYou
.com.au

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or call



RECYCLING HOTLINE
1300 733 712

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recycled. By recycling cork in Australia, rather than harvesting and importing from overseas, energy use and carbon emissions are minimised, and money is saved.

Girl Guides Australia are world pioneers in cork recycling, beginning their program in 1990. Since then, this program alone collected over 160 million corks throughout Australia. That's 20.7 tonnes for just the first 6 months of 2008. Currently, other community organizations including MND Victoria, Friends of the Zoos and Green Collect also collect corks for recycling.

Cork collections

Corks can be dropped off to a wide network of collection points including hotels, bottle shops, restaurants, retail outlets and banks. The Girl Guides also collect cork from The Body Shop outlets and QANTAS Lounges. To find a drop-off location in your local area, visit RecyclingNearYou.com.au

Some collections points also accept plastic corks, which can be recycled into underground cable covers. Check RecyclingNearYou for details.

Why not set up a cork collection box at your business, restaurant, café, wine bar or at your house? Contact the Girl Guides Office in your state to set up a collection point near you.

What happens to the corks?

After collection, corks are sorted, foreign debris removed and corks sent to local manufacturers. Recycled cork isn't used again for wine stoppers, but is incorporated into such diverse products as memo boards, placemats, coasters, floor tiles, gaskets, horse-float mats, boat decking and inners for hockey and cricket balls.

Australia has the world's largest wine cork recycling plant run by Logic Australia that produces a variety of products, including flooring made from 100% recycled material.

More information

Guides Australia (guidesaus.org.au)
MND Victoria (mnd.asn.au)
Friends of the Zoos ('Get involved' section: fotz.org.au)
Green Collect (greencollect.org)
Logic Australia (www.logicaustralia.com.au)



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