

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 numerous drop-off points by community groups such as Friends of the Zoos (VIC), Girl Guides Australia (QLD and NT), Motor Neuron Disease (VIC) and Green Collect (Melbourne only). 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.

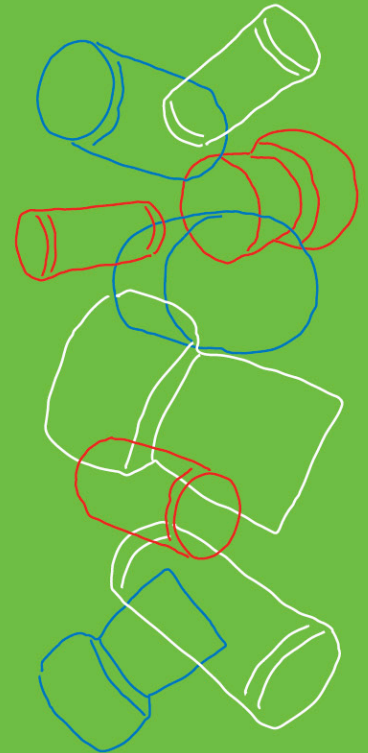
Recycling cork saves resources and reduces demand placed on cork plantations. Approximately 550 tonnes of cork is imported into Australia annually, of which less than 5% is



**NATIONAL
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Factsheet



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visit**



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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 has been a world pioneer in cork recycling, beginning its program in 1990. Since then, this program alone collected over 160 million corks. Currently, other community organisations including Motor Neuron Disease, Friends of the Zoos and Green Collect also collect corks for recycling.

Cork collections

In some states, corks can be dropped off at a number of collection points including hotels, bottle shops, restaurants, retail outlets and banks. In other states, small quantities of corks can be posted to a range of organisations. To find a cork recycling option in your local area, visit RecyclingNearYou.com.au/Corks.

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

Why not set up a cork collection box at your business, restaurant, café, wine bar or at your house? There are some recycling companies that offer national collection services for commercial quantities of corks. To find a commercial cork recycling service for your workplace or business, visit BusinessRecycling.com.au.

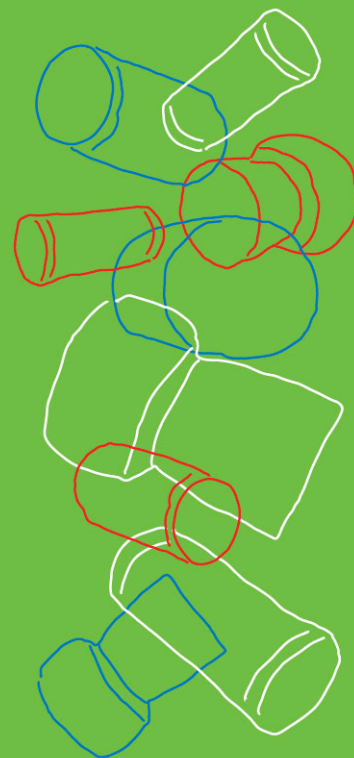
What happens to the corks?

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 diverse products such 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

Girl Guides Queensland (guidesqld.org/)
Motor Neuron Disease Victoria (mnd.asn.au)
Friends of the Zoos ('Get Involved' section fotz.org.au)
Green Collect (greencollect.org)
Logic Australia (logicaustralia.com.au)



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