

## Tales from Tim's Recycling Bin – Bigger is Not Always Better

Recently one of our park maintenance staff asked me what to do with some worn out plastic playground equipment. It had that familiar chasing arrows with the number in the middle. A symbol that leads many people to think that the item is recyclable. Even though it's not.

That symbol is not a government standard. It's something the plastics industry invented years ago to denote the base resin used to make the item. Base is the key word. Base as in where you start from. While the playground equipment was stamped with a #2 like the #2 molded into a laundry detergent jug - these #2s are not equal. Outdoor equipment has added UV protectants so that sunlight would cause it to degrade. Those added chemicals mean that you can't melt it with the laundry detergent jug.

Manufacturers who buy our recycling to use in their new products and packaging want basic, homogenous material. They are set up to recycle products or packaging made with few ingredients – a water bottle, a laundry detergent jug. Once items get additives or other components manufacturers can't use them.

When it comes to recycling plastics stick to the basics: bottles, jugs, cups and containers. Do not put bulky plastic items such as toys, chairs, hangers or laundry baskets in your cart. Instead, like we did with the playground equipment, put them in the trash.

Until next time, keep your plastic recycling basic not bulky my friends.

