

They'll be back: Yard waste containers get grates to keep garbage out



Solid Waste Operator Rusty Gover pushes cut grass through the grate on top of a yard waste bin he emptied into his truck Monday morning. The grates were installed recently in an attempt to prevent people from dumping bags of household garbage into the bins that are meant for organic yard waste. - News-Record photo by Nathan Payne

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Gillette workers have been installing metal grates on the top of city yard waste Dumpsters since spring in an effort to keep household garbage and plastic garbage sacks from contaminating otherwise recyclable material.

More than 150 containers will get the metal frames this summer, said city spokesman Joe Lunne.

But there's a problem: Some of the big yard waste bins already have been damaged because people are trying to shove tree branches and limbs through the grates, he said.

Those Dumpsters have been removed for maintenance.

Tree branches are supposed to be placed next to yard waste Dumpsters, not jammed into the coverings.

Residents can dump grass clippings and leaves into the containers, but no plastic bags are allowed because they don't compost. There are instructions on how to use the yard waste bins on the side on each bin.

Incorrect use of the yard waste container has been a problem since the yard waste program started in 1995 with six containers, Lunne said.

Another problem the city has encountered with the Dumpsters is that commercial landscaping businesses are putting their waste in the city's Dumpsters after they complete a residential project instead of taking it to the landfill as they are supposed to, Lunne said.

"That's not acceptable," he said. "They're for homeowners only."

The program provides free yard waste pickup every week in city neighborhoods, and it produces an organic mulch from the waste for residents.

The city chose to try the metal grates in order to prevent contamination of the yard waste. Its Solid Waste Division workers gradually have been upgrading them since spring, so if the Dumpsters are missing on your block, it should

only be a matter of days before the containers appear again, Lunne said.

If every one who uses the Dumpsters followed the rules there wouldn't have been a need to cover the bins with bars, City Administrator Mike Muirhead said.

"It's a voluntary program," he said. "The concept is really good."

The city will reevaluate the yard waste recycling program this fall and winter, Muirhead said.