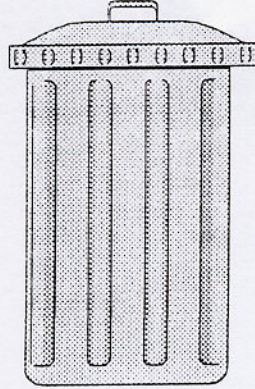


Profiles in Garbage

by Gwen Holbrow

Waste is expensive. First there is the expense of creating it, followed by the expense of disposing of it. The Germans have found a very effective way to discourage waste: garbage collection fees reflect the actual costs of disposal, and are assessed by the size of garbage can you rent from the city. You get rid of what you pay for! In Oberursel, a 60 liter garbage bin (*Mülltonne*) costs DM 277.80 per year, a 120 liter bin costs DM 479.40 per year, and a 240 liter bin costs DM 882 per year. Rates in other towns are similar. These costs are passed on to renters in the additional charges (*Nebenkosten*) tacked on to your rent, so recycling could easily save you several hundred dollars each year. If your needs could be met by a smaller bin than the one you are currently using, ask your landlord or local *Bauhof* or *Bauverwaltung* for a smaller one.



wax coated paper, photographs, carbon paper, aluminum foil, or greaseproof paper. In other towns, including Kronberg and Bad Soden, each household has a separate blue garbage bin (*Blauetonne*) for paper and cardboard, collected monthly for no charge.

Old **batteries** are collected at any place which sells batteries and also in specially labeled *Altbatterien* containers. Of course, rechargeable batteries are an economical alternative and when no longer usable can

be returned to the store where purchased. Car batteries also should be left at the store when you purchase a new one.

Clothing, shoes, bedding and toys are collected frequently by charities. You will find a flyer in your mailbox announcing an *Altkleidersammlung*. Put the materials you wish to donate in a plastic bag, with flyer attached, at the curb by 8 am on the day of collection. All should be in good clean condition, and shoes should be tied together in pairs. There may also be a Red Cross *Altkleider* bin at your local *Bauhof*, similar to Goodwill drop-off points in the United States.

Recycling is the number one tool for reducing your trash volume. And like so many things in this country, it's not just a good idea—it's the law!

Glass recycling bins, labeled *Altglas*, are everywhere. These receptacles are for glass bottles and drinking glasses, but not window glass, light bulbs, mirrors, optical glass, or ceramics. Glass should be separated by color, and all rings and caps removed (these can go in your yellow sack).

In many communities, right next to every *Altglascontainer* is a **paper** recycling bin (*Altpapiercontainer*). Recyclable paper includes newspapers and magazines, paper and cardboard packaging, wrapping paper (if not foil or plastic coated), catalogs, telephone books, and corrugated cardboard, but not plastic or

After recycling bins, your most important garbage management tool is your Garbage Calendar (*Abfallkalender*) available from your local city hall (*Rathaus*), and mailed to all residents at the beginning of each year. On the calendar you will find the dates of all the various kinds of trash pick-up in your area for the entire year. The first important date is **Christmas tree** (*Weihnachtsbaum*) pick-up, usually in the second week of January.

The other dates you will need to know (and names and symbols you will need to decipher) include:

Wertstoff, Gelbe Sack, or DSD: Recycled **packaging materials** in the yellow sack. The yellow bags are available free at grocery stores and city halls, and may even be delivered directly to your house to encourage you to use them. They even have pictures on them to tell you what they should contain:

Metal (steel, tin and aluminum cans, bottle caps, disposable aluminum pans, aluminum foil, etc.)

Plastic (plastic bags and bottles, empty yogurt and margarine containers, styrofoam meat trays or packaging peanuts, etc.)

Combination materials (milk and juice cartons, vacuum packaging, waxed or coated paper)

Anything else which is stamped with the *Grüne Punkt* logo, except paper, cardboard and glass, which belong in separate bins. All food containers should be completely emptied, but need not be washed or rinsed.

Grünabfall or Gartenabfall: **Garden waste** (must be in biodegradable containers, such as cardboard, brown paper, jute twine)

Leaves

Grass clippings

Small branches

Garden waste may also be brought directly to the *Bauhof* or, better yet, composted along with organic kitchen waste (*Biomüll*). To encourage composting, the city of Oberursel subsidizes the purchase of a composter. For DM 50, you can obtain one from A.F. Halm, Kiesweg 6, Oberursel, Telephone 06171-73581. The city pays the rest.

Sondermüll: Materials containing **solvents or other strong chemicals**
Paint, paint thinner, paint stripper
Bleach

Pesticides

Cleaning liquids

Photographic chemicals

Nail polish remover

Fluorescent light tubes

Aerosol spray cans

Sperrmüll: **Large household goods** (but usually not appliances)

Furniture

Bicycles

Carpets

Cabinets

Mattresses

Mirrors

Restmüll: **Normal weekly trash collection**, for which you are charged. If you are an efficient recycler and composter, it shouldn't contain much more than used tissues, old light bulbs, broken dishes, and the dirt you sweep off the floor. If you do occasionally have too much for your bin (now that you've switched to a much smaller one, of course) you can buy an official *Einwegmüllsack* with the name of your town printed on it, for a few DM from your city hall. These will be collected with your normal trash, unlike any trash in any unofficial bags.

Other special wastes:

Old **medications**, empty medicine containers, and broken mercury **thermometers** should be dropped off at any pharmacy (*Apotheke*). Old **tires** and used **motor oil** can be left at the place where new ones were purchased, or brought to the *Bauhof*, usually for a fee. **Construction waste and appliances** can also be brought to the *Bauhof*.

