

Making Ripples

by Amanda Bancroft

Have you ever wondered what to do with old clothing that's too damaged to be sewn or donated to charities to be worn again? Luckily, there are more ways to recycle fabric besides repurposing it as a rag or donating it: recycle it! If it's able to be cleaned, there are companies which accept donations of used and damaged clothing, shoes, and other textiles to be recycled and made into various products such as upholstery stuffing and carpeting.

According to the Council for Textile Recycling (CTR), Americans throw away 82 pounds of textile and footwear per person per year, which means that 85 percent of all textile waste ends up in landfills, adding up to 25 billion pounds per year. The CTR is a non-profit organization "devoted to creating awareness about keeping our clothing, footwear, and textiles out of landfills." According to their website, consumers can drop off used clothing even if those items can't be resold: "Approximately 2 out of every 10 lbs. of donated clothing are sold in charitable shops, the remaining 8 lbs. is purchased and salvaged by private sector recyclers." According to a source at Goodwill who wished to remain anonymous, Goodwill does accept clothing and other textiles which cannot be resold. They sort through donation bags and have a "salvage" category for items that can be bound into blocks and sold by the pound to textile recyclers. The address of the Fayetteville donation location is: 3105 W Martin Luther King, Jr Blvd.

Outdoor gear companies like Patagonia offer to repair their products which are damaged by normal consumer use (such as backpacks that tear on a hike). If you don't want to mail it in, they also provide DIY repair guides online, and at the end of their product's life, allow customers to send it back for recycling. If a customer just wants a newer product they can trade in their older one for a discount on new gear! The old products are resold at a reduced rate or recycled. They do their best to keep their products out of the landfill by incentivizing consumers to repair, trade in, or recycle Patagonia products. It's a pretty sweet deal!

Individuals can mail their textile donations to:

Attn: Production Dept.
American Textile Recycling Service, Inc.
10739 West Little York, Suite 100
Houston, TX 77041
Note: For Recycling

It would be nice if Arkansas had more textile recycling bins like they do in many cities around the country. Places like grocery stores, schools, animal services, churches, non-profits or restaurants can host a donation bin and receive profits. Here are a couple of options if you'd like to research the possibility of hosting a bin:

USAgain's slogan is "use it again!" According to their website, "USAgain (pronounced "use-again") is a for-profit company that collects unwanted textiles and resells them in the U.S. and

abroad, effectively diverting millions of pounds of clothing from landfills, generating new revenue streams for U.S. businesses and non-profits, and fueling local economies in emerging countries.” They operate 12,000 collection bins in 16 states. There are currently none listed for Arkansas. Visit USAgain.com to learn more about hosting.

You might consider hosting a donation bin through American Textile Recycling instead. They explain that it only takes five square feet, and they provide the bin, maintenance and pick-up three to five times weekly. They aren’t currently in Arkansas but supposedly are expanding quickly. Visit atrscorp.com for more information.

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist building an off-grid cottage for land conservation on Kessler Mountain. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer a solar-hosted online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.