

# MECHANICAL RECYCLING

IS IT THE KEY TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY, OR A HOLDING PATTERN?

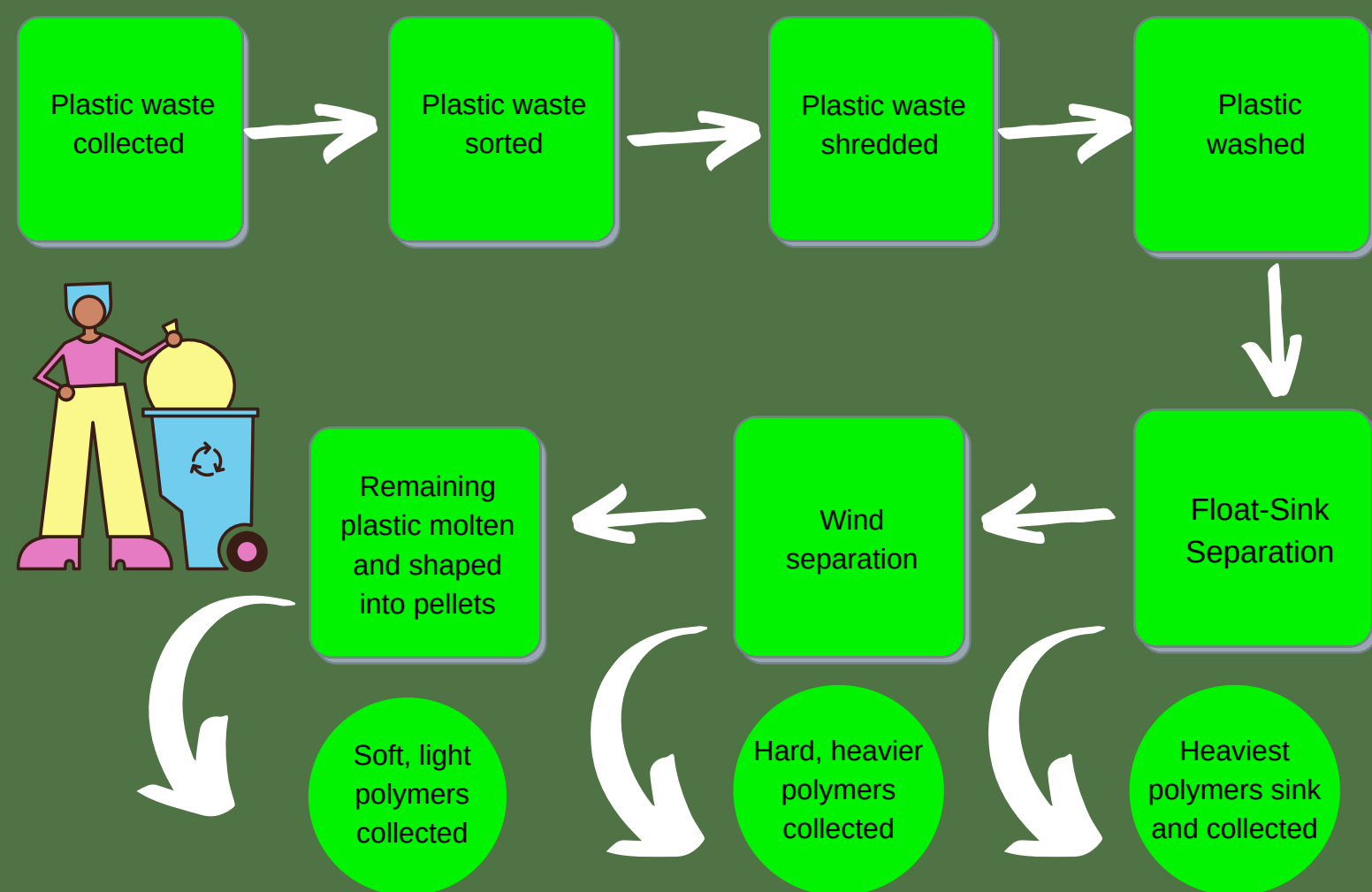


MOST WIDELY USED RECYCLING METHOD FOR HOUSEHOLD PLASTIC WASTE

AS OF 2018, 47% OF PLASTIC PACKAGING WASTE WAS RECYCLED MECHANICALLY IN THE UK

CALLED MECHANICAL RECYCLING AS THE PLASTICS UNDERGO MECHANICAL PROCESSES, SUCH AS: WASHING, SEPARATING, DRYING, GRINDING AND MELTING

## How Does It Work?



## What's the problem?

- Lots of steps, which need a lot of energy, which can damage the plastic.
- Damaged plastic cannot be used again for its original purpose...would you buy food from damaged packaging?
- This damage means mechanical recycling is also called downcycling, or open-loop recycling. This is because damaged plastic will eventually end up being landfilled, or burnt, when it becomes unusable.

## Can recycling be done another way?

- Chemical recycling can break plastics down more "softly" and makes it possible to re-use them over and over again.
- This form of recycling can also be called upcycling or closed-loop recycling (check out our infographic on it!).
- There is currently a big push to reduce the variety of plastic materials on the market, as some are unsuitable for recycling. This will also make sorting plastics pre-recycling easier.

