

Android 12 may support a trash bin for deleted files, but it's messy

Google appears to be preparing to add a feature to Android devices that has long been a part of more traditional desktop operating systems: a trash bin (or, if you prefer the way Windows names it, a recycle bin). *XDA-Developers* has been digging into the code for Android 12 to uncover features that Google hasn't officially announced yet, and the latest is a line in the main Settings app for "Trash."

When you tap "Trash," Android 12 should pop up a dialog box telling you how much storage deleted files are taking up on your system and giving you the option to empty it. It looks like it should work just like it does on Windows or a Mac, but in practice it's likely to be much more complicated for a variety of reasons.

Android actually got a trash API in Android 11 that apps could use to hide files instead of instantly and fully deleting them, but it seems little used. Google itself appears to be preparing to support it in the Files by Google app, but so far it hasn't shown up in the live version of it.

So the trash feature already exists in Android 11, but few apps seem to be using it; and even if they did, there's not yet a way to actually recover trashed files. In Android 12, the settings *XDA* uncovered don't appear to offer recovery either, but individual file management apps – like Google's – could.

Android file management isn't quite as straightforward as it

is on your desktop OS. For example, the newer scoped storage settings mean that files that are “trashed” are technically just hidden in place by putting a period at the front of their file name. Plus, every different Android maker can choose to use its own file management app instead of the one offered by Google – and those apps may or may not support the new trash API.

In short, Android 12 and Google’s own Files app could support trashing and recovering files, but that doesn’t mean any of the apps on Android 12 necessarily will.

So: messy. But that’s what happens with any OS that develops over time with newer security models. Ultimately, what we theoretically want is an easy-to-understand trash bin that can be checked for deleted files to recover. Google appears to be pushing Android in that direction, at least.

The key word here is “pushing,” though. Implementing a feature like a trash / recycle bin requires getting everybody in the ecosystem on board, and Android is a huge ecosystem. Because of the way Android updates are structured, deep system updates that affect hundreds of manufacturers and thousands of developers take literal years to implement. Plus, of course, it takes far too long for most Android phones to get the latest version of Android in the first place.

Other features in Android 12 won’t be held back by such complications. It looks like Google will let you call the Assistant by holding down the power button, and is adding new emoji, offering new homescreen layouts, and changing some other minor UI elements. XDA has collected a bunch of the tweaks it has uncovered here.

<https://www.theverge.com/2021/4/16/22388196/google-android-12-trash-bin-recover-lost-deleted-files>