

LEAVES --WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Mulch Them In Place/Mow Them

Leaves are rich in carbon, phosphorus, and potassium - all essential nutrients needed by plants including turf grasses. Simply mow your leaves along with the grass during fall, and let the small leaf pieces filter down among the grass blades. Make sure grass is exposed to the sun after the tree leaves have been mulched.

The following guidance is taken from the Department of Horticulture - Michigan State University Green Tips sheet on Mulching Tree Leaves Into Lawns.

- Leave your mower set to the same height you use to mow your lawn
- Use a rotary mower that pulverizes the leaves
- Mow when the leaves are dry
- Make sure that mower blades are sharp and use a slow movement with the mower to help grind the leaves finer
- 3-4 passes may be required to chop leaves fine enough so that they filter through the turf and expose grass leaves to sunlight; i.e. make sure that pulverized leaves do not cover the grass blades completely
- Ground leaves should settle into the turf in a day or two, especially with rain
- It is best to mow tree leaves regularly, not letting them lie more than 3-4 days
- Although additional nitrogen has not shown any major benefit, the Department of Horticulture - Michigan State University suggests applying 1/2 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in addition to the normal fall fertilization in order to speed tree leaf decomposition

[10-Minute Video: Turn Over a New Leaf \(YOU TUBE VIDEO\)](#) Macromedia Flash Player is required to view the video. [Download Flash Player here.](#)

Compost Them

Composting is the natural recycling process that you can begin at home with leaves, grass clippings, and other lawn and garden waste. Leaves are high in carbon and can be used as one of the brown yard wastes when making a compost pile.

Use Them For Mulch

Mulches offer your garden and landscapes many benefits from moisture retention to temperature moderation to erosion prevention. Yard wastes such as grass clippings, leaves, and chipped or shredded brush and branches can be used as organic mulches. Organic mulches are usually applied 3 inches deep over the soil and around plants to achieve the benefits of mulching.

Disposal

Local opportunities for curbside pick-up or drop-off sites differ by municipality. Check for yard waste drop-off site availability in your community using the Community Recycling Drop-Off Sites link on the Yard Waste & Composting webpage, or call your municipal hall to find out if your community has scheduled yard waste pick-ups.