

Leave the Leaves

According to our last NAGC speaker and author, Rebecca Warner, the best thing we can do for our yards is to leave the mulch that Nature provides us. Leaves are Nature's way of replenishing the soil, helping it to retain water, improve its structure and gain nutrients. Rather than raking, blowing, bagging and hauling away leaves, let them be. Well, almost...

Leaves on grass should be cut into small pieces with your lawnmower and allowed to break down into compost, thereby feeding your lawn with free, plentiful, chemical-free fertilizer. Because chopped leaves break down quickly, they are also a great addition to your compost pile. Whole leaves will smother the grass in your lawn, but are fine, if a bit slower, in a compost pile and are a perfect winter coat for garden beds, shrubs and trees. Whole leaves also provide protection and habitat for essential populations of overwintering insects and butterflies.

Leaving the leaves saves us (and the Town) money and time. We no longer will need to buy and spread as much mulch, water so much, use chemical fertilizers and weed killers, or buy so many brown paper leaf bags. DPW trucks will burn less gas with fewer stops. Leaving leaves reduces the noise, gas, dust, and particulate matter pollution caused by those two-stroke backpack leaf blowers that invade our neighborhoods this time of year. Along with pollution, blowers are destructive to top soil and bad for plants. After several days of 50+ degree weather in the spring, you can rake or remove leaves by hand to neaten up gardens. This allows the insects to survive and helps provide an early and diverse high protein diet for birds ready to start their nesting.

Leaving the leaves as Mother Nature intended saves our backs and enriches the ecosystem that surrounds us. How easy and great is that??!! To learn more, visit LeaveLeavesAlone.org from Cornell University Master Gardeners.

Seasonal Reminders

- *If you feel you must* decorate with Oriental Bittersweet (I know how enticing it can be), dispose of it properly. Never, ever put Bittersweet into the woods or your compost pile. Bag it up and throw it in the *TRASH*.

- Burning Bush is absolutely gorgeous right now. BUT, be aware that it is illegal to buy Winged Euonymus (or any of its cultivars) or plant it in Massachusetts. It is an invasive that forms dense thickets in woodlands where it outcompetes and steals habitat from native plants. The prolific berries are eaten by birds and critters that then disperse the seeds into natural areas. The Fothergilla in Memorial Park on Bradstreet Road has been a glorious bright red this fall – and it is native!!

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