

WHY IS LEAF MANAGEMENT IMPORTANT FOR OUR COMMUNITY AND OUR ENVIRONMENT?

Every year deciduous trees lose their leaves as the days become shorter and colder. Traditionally, many Hopewell homeowners have piled their leaves at the curb for pickup by the municipality, but this practice has many downsides for our community and our environment.

Learn what you can do to make better use of this valuable natural resource.

Be part of the solution.



By implementing these easy and creative solutions, we can enrich our soil, prevent air and water pollution, save money and become an even greener, more sustainable community. It's a win-win-win situation which you can help control.

**QUESTIONS?
PLEASE CONTACT US!**



HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

201 Washington Crossing—Pennington Road
Titusville, NJ 08560
(609)737-0605
www.hopewelltp.org/environmenmain.html

For further composting information visit:

<http://www.mgofmc.org/docs/homecomposting.pdf>
and
[http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/subcategory.asp?
cat=5&sub=36](http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/subcategory.asp?cat=5&sub=36)



Hopewell's Guide To Fall Leaf Management



PROBLEMS WITH PILING LEAVES ON THE CURB FOR PICKUP

Safety: Leaves on the street force cars out across the center line, attract children and can cause fires when hot mufflers or catalytic converters touch dry leaves. Where there are no sidewalks, pedestrians and bicyclists are forced towards the center of the street.

The Law: NJ state law forbids piling leaves on streets. Hopewell law forbids lawn maintenance companies/contractors from placing yard waste for curbside pickup. It must be taken to an eco-facility for disposal.

Flooding and Water Pollution: In a sense, the streets are essentially dry creek beds that are directly linked to Hopewell's streams. Though leaves are supposed to be piled on the curb rather than on the pavement, many leaves nevertheless end up on the street. These get rained on, start to decompose, and then release nutrient pollution into waterways before the leaves can be picked up. In addition, leaves block storm drains, resulting in flooding.

Energy Consumption: Piling leaves on the curb for pickup triggers a highly mechanized chain of events. The leaves must be collected by municipal employees using specialized equipment and hauled to appropriate disposal areas. If homeowners instead use or compost their own leaves in their yards, we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Expense and diversion of staff from other municipal services: Leaf collection increases wear and tear on township vehicles and draws crews away from other services they would otherwise provide. Leaves may remain uncollected or become buried when township crews need to divert their attention to snow removal activities. Early winter weather may prohibit collections altogether.

Tree Health: Leaves contain valuable nutrients. If leaves are removed, soil fertility is diminished, which can, over time, affect the health of trees and other plants.

WAYS TO USE LEAVES IN YOUR YARD

Think of leaves as an **asset**. These simple procedures will reduce fuel use, keep our air cleaner and benefit your soil and plants.

1. The simplest thing to do is **rake or blow leaves into a wood lot on your property**, if available.
2. **Mulch leaves with a mower** and they will disappear back into the lawn. The fragmented leaves can also be raked onto flower beds and other landscape areas as a mulch. Mulch should not touch main stems/trunks and should not exceed 3 inches depth. For thick, persistent leaves like those of a red oak, using a corral (see item #4) or the mulch mower approach will keep them from blowing back into the yard. Though a mower with a mulching blade would be optimal, all power mowers should do an adequate job. Self propelled leaf vacuum/shredder machines also do a wonderful job of vacuuming, mulching and bagging leaves and small branches in just one pass.
3. **Spread leaves on your garden** and leave them there to hold in moisture, suppress weeds, keep the soil cool in the summer, and slowly release nutrients and organic matter. Planting tomatoes, for instance, requires nothing more than parting leaves to put the new plants in. The leaf mulch reduces rotting of any tomatoes that touch the ground.
4. **Rake leaves into a pile.** A corral or circle of wire fencing will keep them from blowing around. The leaf pile quickly reduces in size over the winter. The leaves can be left to decompose, acting like a sponge to catch the rain, and releasing nutrients to benefit the health of all trees and other landscaping in the vicinity. Contrary to popular notions of composting, it is not necessary to laboriously turn the pile. Leaf piles do not create odors.

5. **Use leaves to control weeds** by raking them towards the fence line where they can serve as a mulch to keep down weeds that often dominate there. A thick layer of leaves discourages weeds. You can dump leaves on weeds or other groundcovers that are getting out of control. For weeds or groundcovers strong enough to push up through the leaves, first place overlapping pieces of cardboard. Both will decompose over time.
6. **Use leaves in your regular compost pile** to balance the volume and weight of green material, absorb excess moisture and aid the decomposition process. Dry, mulched leaves can be stored in bags and added to your compost pile year-round.
7. **Tell your Lawn Maintenance Company** your desire to reuse leaves on your property using some of the above methods. This will save time and money on clean-up and disposal costs. You will also save money by not having to regularly buy landscape mulch.

