THE COLORS OF FALL

When the weather turns cold, we love to watch the leaves turn vibrant colors. However, once they fall off the trees, they clog our storm sewers and pollute our waterways.

So, what do we do with the leaves once they fall?

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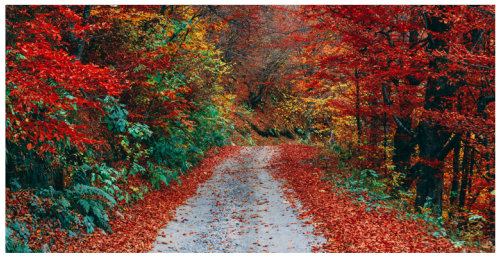
Reap the Benefits of Proper Leaf Disposal



The beautiful vivid colors of Fall leaves are one of Western Pennsylvania's most prized assets. As beautiful as they are, leaves can become a nuisance.

During seasonal months, particularly in October and November, folks struggle with the best way to dispose of leaves on their property It may seem tempting to sweep the leaves into the street, but this will create a long-term problem for our ecosystem.

When leaves are swept onto the street, they will eventually migrate into the storm sewers. Once in the storm sewers, the leaf debris that carries fertilizers and pesticides, along with other yard waste, will outfall into lakes and streams without any water quality treatment. This pollution promotes the growth of algae blooms that degrade water quality, harming lake and river ecosystems and aquatic life. Leaves can also clog culverts, storm drains and pipes, increasing the risk of flooding during heavy rains.

To avoid the harmful effects on our waterways from disposing of leaves, the following alternatives are safe and responsible ways to remove leaves.

Offsite Disposal

- Many municipalities hold scheduled leaf pick up days. Check your local municipality's website or contact the office by telephone to see if this program is offered within your community.
- A private refuse hauler may haul away your leaves for a fee. You can search your local newspaper or ask for possible suggestions from your municipality for vendors who may perform this service.
- There are several composting facilities in Southwestern Pennsylvania that will accept leaf waste and yard debris. Learn more: https://recyclesearch.com/profile/padep-facility-directory

Mulching and Composting

- Leaves are an inexpensive and beneficial mulch that can be used around trees, shrubs, and/or in gardens.
- When leaves decompose, nutrients are added to the soil acting as a natural mulching additive. Leaves also act as a protectant in cold temperature fluctuations.
- Composting materials should feel moist but not overly soggy and they should also feel warm to the touch, except in the cold winter months.
- A good compost mix will consist of a 3 to 1 ratio of leaves to grasses.
- To prevent unpleasant odors that can occur when materials decompose without oxygen, compost should be turned regularly to ensure that air is reaching the center of the pile.

Reminder: No Leaf Burning Please!

- Leaf burning has often been viewed as a fall tradition, but it is also illegal under the federal Clean Air Act and the Pennsylvania Air Pollution Control Act.
- In addition to leaf burning being illegal, it is damaging to air quality and studies show a link between high levels of particulate pollution released from smoke, to chronic coughs and respiratory illnesses. This can be very troubling for those who suffer from asthma.

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