

“Leave Your Leaves” - A Workshop by the Fairfield Garden Club

Leaves are a valuable resource! They add nutrients to our soil, improve drainage and reduce the need to add fertilizers in the spring. You don't need to remove them all from your lawns and gardens. Work with your landscaper to keep all (or most) of your leaves on your property.

- Whole, shredded or “mulch-mowed” leaves can be left in garden beds to decompose and protect the roots of your plants. They also provide important habitat for overwintering insects, bees and birds.
- A reasonable amount of mulch mowed leaves can be left on your lawn and the excess blown into beds and under shrubs.

Strategies for Your Lawn:

- You can leave some leaves on your lawn — up to a limit.
- DO NOT leave whole leaves long term on your lawn, or they will create dead spots.
- DO mulch-mow dry leaves on your lawn. Work with your landscaper to find a happy medium for the amount of mulch-mowed leaves you are comfortable leaving.
- Rake or blow excess leaves off your lawn into garden beds, or under shrubs and trees.
- For large amounts of excess leaves, blow them into piles and onto tarps, then drag them to your mulch pile.

Strategies for Your Perennial and Shrub Garden Beds:

- Leaves are a natural mulch. They decompose into soil and protect the roots of your plants.
- Whenever possible, leave *whole* leaves in your perennial beds and around the base of shrubs.
 - *If you don't have wood mulch in your beds, you can probably leave about 8-10 inches of whole leaves and they will compress with rain.*
 - *If you do have wood mulch in your beds, stick with 3” of whole leaves.*
 - *If you want faster decomposition of leaves in your beds, you can rake most of the whole leaves out of your beds, mulch-mow them, and then blow them back in.*
- We also recommend postponing your garden bed cleanup until late spring. At that time, you can rake decomposing whole leaves out of your beds, mulch-mow them, and blow them back in.

Strategies for Your Mulch Piles:

- Plan your mulch pile location(s) ahead of time and don't forget to tell your landscaper!
- You can choose from a variety of storage options (compost corrals, pits, bins or just piles)
- Remember, if you mulch-mow your leaves for storage, they reduce 16:1, so your leaf mulch piles may not become noticeably larger from year to year.

The Truth about Gas Powered Leaf Blowers:

- They emit carbon monoxide, smog-forming nitrous oxides, and carcinogenic hydrocarbons.
- They produce more than 100 decibels of low-frequency, wall-penetrating sound and can cause tinnitus and hearing loss with long exposure (Audubon Magazine)
- They stir up dust containing mold, animal feces, heavy metals and chemicals (Yale Climate Connections)

Read this NYTimes editorial on 10/21/21 by Margaret Renkl about the hazards of gas blowers to you and the environment: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/25/opinion/leaf-blowers-california-emissions.html?auth=login-google&referringSource=articleShare>