

Love 'Em and Leave 'Em Talking Points

Seasonal Problem: piles of leaves along roadway in the fall – its costs money to pick them up, dispose of them. Also, they cause unsafe driving conditions and can become a source of unwanted nutrient runoff into our streams and rivers.

Removing leaves from our waste stream potentially eliminates these issues. The DPW cost reduction which results also helps to reduce Village expenses and budget pressures on taxes. The collection and disposal of fall leaves costs Irvington taxpayers up to \$130,000 annually. \$30,000 is tipping fees. \$100,000 is labor including overtime, fuel, equipment maintenance, etc. \$300k - \$400k estimated cost for Town of Greenburgh. *How large a cost saving can be realized is based upon how many leaves are diverted (kept on-site).*

Leave them on your property:

- Shred them with a mulching lawn mower and leave them in place on your lawn.
- Compost them in a pile or container (with or without shredding).
- Shred them and use them as mulch on your borders and flowerbeds.
- Leave them (shredded or not) alone in wooded areas.

Tools: mulching mower, leaf mulcher “tube”, leaf vacuum, weed whacker in garbage can.

Issues:

- Landscape beds – esp. with perennials – carefully remove leaves to shred them and return them in-place as a mulch. Use a leaf vacuum for easiest process.
- Too many leaves - (remember that shredding reduces up to 10:1 in volume). “Hide” excess shredded leaves in landscape beds or (unshredded) in wooded areas. Or compost excess shredded leaves on-site, if possible.
- Last resort – ship shredded leaves off property for use elsewhere – share with a neighbor!

Benefits of leaf mulching/shredding:

- Save money! Reduce the need for commercial fertilizers. Never buy mulch again.
- Save effort! Mulching (shredding) leaves in-place is easier and faster than raking or blowing them to the curb.
- Returns much-needed nutrients to lawn, landscape beds and/or wooded areas.
- Helps retain moisture, reducing the need for watering in dry spells and reduces runoff.
- Protects landscape beds from frost over the winter and helps cool root zones in the summer.
- Lightens clay soils and gives fluff to sandy soils.
- Increases biological activity of earthworms, microbes & beneficial soil organisms.
- Eliminates or reduces yard waste from the entering municipal “waste stream”.

Concerns (about old leaf management approach):

- Blowing of leaves off landscape beds removes all leaf duff, loose top dirt and beneficial organisms.
- Blowing leaves leads to unnecessary noise pollution and aggravation of certain health conditions including asthma and allergies.
- Transporting and disposing of leaves from your curb wastes energy and contributes to pollution.
- Leaving leaves curbside allows decomposition nutrients (e.g.; excess phosphorus) to flow into storm drains.

Simple training for homeowners, landscapers and municipal officials is needed.