

## Leave the Leaves...

### Take A Break, Don't Rake! Mow, Don't Blow!



There's a way you can help the environment AND help save your town hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. It's called *Leave the Leaves*. The idea is very simple: Instead of spending precious tax dollars to collect fallen leaves, local governments ask homeowners to recycle them right on their properties. In Englewood, NJ; Bedford and Irvington, NY; Madison, WI; San Antonio, TX, and many other places, homeowners ***Leave the Leaves!***

*Leave the Leaves* helps the environment, because those leaves replace lawn fertilizers. It avoids the nuisance of piles of leaves that take up parking spaces, clog drains, and present fire risk. It saves local governments a lot of money

The idea behind *Leave the Leaves* is simple and scientifically sound. Think of your property as an ecosystem, like a forest or prairie. An ecosystem is self-contained: everything it produces is used right there in place. As leaves die, they fall to the ground, where they serve several important ecological roles: they insulate the soil from sudden changes in temperature; they also release nutrients into the soil, fertilizing it and improving drainage and soil structure.

*Leave the Leaves* brings these same benefits to your property. It works like this: instead of raking or blowing fallen leaves to the curb, you use them as FREE natural mulch and fertilizer.



Here's what you do:

1. **Mulch while you mow.** Remove the collecting bag on your mower, or ask your lawn service to leave the clippings on the lawn rather than collecting them. In the autumn, as the leaves fall on your lawn, wait for a layer up to 6 inches deep to accumulate. Then mow over them but do not collect the clippings. You will shred the leaves into very small pieces which will break down quickly. Depending on the number and type of trees you have, you may have to do this two or three times.
2. ***Leave the Leaves* beneath your shrubs and perennials.** They are free winter mulch for your plants. If you usually add mulch each year, you will need much less.
3. **Save some leaves for composting.** To make compost, all you need is leaves, and a lot of leaves. So save some or all of your leaves and add them to your compost pile throughout the year.

Google the phrase "leave the leaves," and you'll see the idea popping up on web sites and in newspapers all over the country. See this article: <http://www.northjersey.com/news/environment/leave-the-leaves-1.1449960> for news on what's happening in Glen Rock, NJ.