

Leaf-free Streets before the Storm Can Lead to Cleaner Waters

The green leaves that provide us much needed shade in the summer can contribute to the “greening” of our lakes and rivers as they collect in the streets each fall. Decaying leaves are a great natural fertilizer for gardens and lawns, but they also release unwanted nutrients into our local waters. When it rains, stormwater flows through leaf piles in streets creating a “leaf tea” that is rich in dissolved phosphorus. The phosphorus present in this “leaf tea” cannot be removed through traditional stormwater treatment practices and is carried through our storm sewers to (LIST LOCAL RECEIVING WATERS). Too much phosphorus can lead to toxic algae blooms, low oxygen levels and murky waters, none of which are good for animals living in the water or those of us who use it for recreation. (NAME OF MUNICIPALITY) is actively involved in many efforts to improve the quality of stormwater runoff including (ADD LEAF COLLECTION IF YOUR MUNICIPALITY HAS AN ACTIVE LEAF COLLECTION PROGRAM OR LIST OTHER INITIATIVES); however we don’t have the staff or equipment to remove leaves from streets prior to every rain event. We need your help. Take simple steps before the storm this fall to help keep (LIST LOCAL RECEIVING WATERS) clean.

Remove leaves from street within 5 feet of the curb and any storm drains in front of your property before it rains, then:

- **Pile** collected leaves neatly onto the terrace to keep them from falling back into the street. Covering the piles with a tarp is a good idea to prevent them from blowing around. Check with your municipality for pick up dates and other requirements so that your leaves are on the terrace for as short a time as possible, OR
- **Mulch** leaves directly on the lawn. If your lawn mower has a bagger, empty the chopped up leaves on gardens, flowerbeds or around trees and shrubs, OR
- **Compost**- Mix leaves with other compostable items and spread it on gardens next spring. It saves money and water, helps your gardens, and benefits the environment. For tips on how to start composting, visit <http://myfairlakes.com/yardAndGarden.aspx#compost>. If you don’t have the room in your yard, take your leaves to the [Dane County compost site](#).

For more information on ways to “Love Your Lakes and Rivers, Don’t Leaf Them” visit:

http://myfairlakes.com/fall_campaign.aspx .