

How to manage leaves to make the best use of urban natural resources.

Every fall, Mother Nature delivers her bounty of leaves bringing blessings to sustainable gardeners. The best way to handle this bounty is by keeping leaves on site where they improve soil and storm water quality, decrease transportation costs along with wear & tear on city streets, improve bicycle safety, and reduce chemical inputs to your lawn and garden. Leaves are a wonderful resource when used as mulch, raked into piles and under shrubs,



mowed into shredded bits, and composted into gardeners gold. See reverse for more details.

The City of Eugene Solid Waste and Green Building program would like to encourage you to handle leaves in this order 1) Use leaves on-site. 2) Put leaves in your yard debris bin. 3) Haul leaves to a compost facility 4) Put leaves out for City collection, and follow City guideline as to when and where leaves may be left in the street. Why should street pickup be the last choice? The economic

and environmental benefits to the citizens of Eugene are heavily in favor of the first three choices because they promote reduced costs for public services, and increased soil health for residents even if they are not avid gardeners.

### On-Site Use of Leaves:

No doubt about it, the most beneficial choice for your garden, the community, and the environment. When used as mulch, shredded into tiny bits, or transformed into compost, leaves are a dynamic force in creating rich healthy soils.

### Off Site Use of Leaves:

#### Yard debris collection is provided by your licensed hauler.

Yard debris service is included with garbage collection if your service level is 32 gallons twice a month or greater. Yard debris is collected by haulers twice a month, providing an opportunity to recycle leaves into beneficial compost. Extra yard debris containers can be requested for an additional \$2.30 to \$3.20 per month depending on where you live. Those without garbage service can subscribe for yard debris collection by contacting any licensed garbage hauler in Eugene.

#### Haul to a composting facility.

Yard debris composting facilities such as Rexius or Lane Forest Products will take leaves for a minimal charge along with other yard debris material. Remember, "if it grows, it goes". Keep soil, garbage, plastic, and sod out of the compost.

#### Use the City of Eugene leaf collection program.

Follow the leaf program guidelines at [www.eugene-or.gov/leaf](http://www.eugene-or.gov/leaf) phone: 682-4800  
By using any of the methods described in this fact sheet, not a single leaf will enter the landfill, making better use of our natural resources.



## Waste Prevention & Green Building



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Last updated: 10/11  
By Anne Donahue

## What to do with all those leaves!

Leaves are high in minerals and organic matter that “feed the soil” and improve soil structure for all soil types. Most leaves are beneficial, ranging in pH from 4.4 to 6.8. Even walnut leaves left to sit for a year can make fine mulch for the garden. Here are several methods to help you use leaves to your advantage!



**Leave-Em!** Let leaves decompose naturally where they fall! Nature’s decomposers will break down leaf debris from one year to the next!

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**Request-Em!** Don’t have enough leaves? Request a 7-yard load of leaves collected in your neighborhood to be delivered to your property through the City’s Leaf Collection program.

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**Mulch-Em!** Rake leaves under trees and shrubs or into a pile or wire bin and “leaf them be”. Within 12 months to 2 years, these leaves will slowly break down into “leaf mold” which can hold over 300 times its weight in water, creating a water savings bank for soils during hot summer months.

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**Mow-em!** Make quick leaf mulch by mowing leaves into shredded pieces. Use a mulching lawn mower or add a mulching blade to a non-mulching mower. Shredded leaves will decompose much faster than whole leaves and is well worth the effort. Use shredded leaf mulch to deter weeds and improve water retention throughout the summer. Mulch with 3-6 inches on garden beds, and 6-12 inches on garden pathways.

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**Trench-em!** Pathway “trench” composting with leaves is the practice of removing soil from pathways and replacing it with 12-24 inches of leaves every fall. Pathway soil and composted leaf material is used to raise the level of growing beds.

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**Compost-Em!** Coffee grounds, food scraps, and grass clippings all blend well with leaves to speed up decomposition. In general, for every bucket of leaves add 1 bucket of grass clippings, or 1/2 bucket of food waste or coffee grounds. Compost in a pile, a bin, or on the ground in layers, mixing materials or alternating layers as you go. Always cover any compost pile with a final layer of leaves to deter pests.

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### How can I get help composting leaves?

OSU Extension Service Master Gardener Compost Specialists are available to talk compost with you! Call (541) 344-0265 Monday-Thursday 10-1 and 2-5.

City of Eugene **Waste Prevention & Green Building Program**

*Promoting sustainable practices in waste prevention and the built environment*