



This Fall, Don't Leave the Leaves!

Keep leaves out of lakes and rivers by keeping them out of the streets and away from storm drains.

From the street, to the stream

Although leaves seem "natural" and harmless, excess leaves pose a threat to the health of our surface water. Leaves in the gutter in front of your house are on the fast track to our lakes and rivers. When it rains, leaves are washed into storm drains and directly into the nearest lake, or the Mississippi River. Once they get into the water and begin to decay, leaves release nutrients that contribute to that green stuff you see on the surface of our neighborhood lakes: algae. Excess algae makes recreation unpleasant, plus decomposing algae uses up oxygen in the water which, in turn, suffocates fish.

Rake them up, not out

Raking leaves into the street the day before the street sweeper comes. Even if those street leaves don't blow away right away, leaves are crushed by car tires and mixed with rain make a rich "nutrient tea" that flows along the gutter into storm drains. So, the fewer leaves that make it to the street, the better.

Here are some watershed-friendly alternatives to raking leaves into the street:

- Compost leaves for a nutrient-rich fertilizer for your gardens

- Use a mower to chop leaves into small particles and apply directly to your lawn to enrich it (this is called top-dressing)

- Use chopped leaves as winter mulch for your flower gardens

- Drop off bagged leaves at a Ramsey County Yard Waste Collection site

Everyone can participate. The distance between your yard and the water's edge is as close as the nearest storm drain. Keep leaves out of the street as an important act of protection for the lakes in our watershed.

Links

Backyard composting: <http://www.reduce.org/>

Purchase a compost bin: <http://www.greenguardian.com/>

Leaf drop-off in Ramsey County: http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/ph/rt/brush_compost_yardwaste.htm