

Why waste natural resources in your own back yard?

I didn't rake any leaves in my landscape this fall. I never rake leaves. That's not because I have someone else do it, nor is it because I'm lazy, (though that point can be debated). It's because leaf raking is a waste of my time and a waste of the fuel that powers our back yard ecosystem.



It's true. Leaves store carbon, helping mitigate global warming. Leaves feed soil microorganisms which build soil volume, fertility, and healthy structure. This healthy soil, in turn feeds, supports and protects all of our landscape plants, not only trees, shrubs and flowers but also lawns. (For a more detailed description see, *Tree Leaves and Their Long Journey Into the Soil* from Arborsmith Wisdom From The Trees January 2019.)



“Don't those leaves kill my grass?” It is hard for me to give you a short answer but, **no**, if you just grind up those leaves with your lawn mower they will not hurt your lawn. In fact, **those ground up leaves will build the soil, fertilize the grass and combat compaction** and best of all, they do it all for free!

You may respond, “But those leaves are too thick to mow.” My little lawn mower had no trouble eating up 12 inch

thick layers of Oak leaves this fall. Better yet, I saw a landscape crew using their industrial mower to mulch up 2 foot high piles of leaves and then blowing the grindings into adjacent mulched shrub beds. That way there were no piles of leaves in the parkway blowing all over the neighborhood. There were no giant piles that have to be picked up by the village and hauled away, or bags stuffed with leaves for the dump. **This smart landscape crew was feeding the landscape, beautifying the lawn and shrub beds in one step without having to load or haul anything away!** That's a bargain for the landscaper, the homeowner and the environment.



Before mowing

Soil Song

*So give yourself a break
Mow don't rake
Leave leaves under
shrubs
Haul nothing away*

*by: Master Arborist,
Gilbert Smith*



After mowing

