

Should You Rake Those Leaves?

When it's autumn and the trees have turned glorious colors, that's when the leaves start decorating our lawn and sidewalks. Should they be raked? Left on the lawn over the winter? Mulched? Here is a sampling of advice:

Rake the leaves?

You can rake or use a blower to collect leaves. That's good exercise as well as a pleasant time to be outside. Leaves left at the curb are picked up by the West Lafayette Street Department. Most of us want to remove leaves from garden beds but if you have a wooded area, you might leave those leaves in your yard. As leaves decompose, they add fertilizer and block weeds.



Mulch the leaves?

There's a general consensus that mulching is the best way to help your lawn when the leaves start falling. If you use a mulching mower, it chops leaves into fragments so small you probably won't see them. You can buy a mulching blade to attach to your lawnmower, or just use your lawnmower, which generally does a good job of mincing the leaves. Let the small bits stay on the lawn so that they can decompose and provide nutrients. If you want a tidier lawn, then mulch the leaves and put them on garden or flower beds or around trees.



Let the leaves stay on the ground all winter?

A mat of leaves on the ground all winter blocks the sun and prevents air from flowing through after snow melts or after a rain. When leaves stay on the lawn all winter, they provide a good environment for snow mold, a fungus that thrives in cool, wet conditions, especially when there's grass underneath. Various unwanted bugs and moles like that cool, wet environment too. If you wait until spring, the matted leaves may slow or stop the growth of plants trying to sprout.