



# FALL LEAVES ON LAWNS

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For some homeowners, raking and bagging leaves in the fall signals an official end to summer and a reason to enjoy great outdoor weather. Others feel raking leaves is a necessary evil.

Both of these thoughts are correct because you want to minimize the negative impact of excess leaves left on the lawn for an extended time. Fall is the last time of year for grass to absorb sunlight. This is important because the plant uses sunlight to manufacture carbohydrates that are stored in the roots. The grass draws on this stored energy for winter survival, getting a jump on early spring growth. Grass that isn't smothered by leaves is one happy plant! So, now that we are motivated to **“utilize best leaf management practices”**, how do we actually do this?

Gathering leaves for the compost bin is a great way to deal with this problem. Or, you can mulch them into the lawn. If the leaves are relatively dry, mulching is a great practice because tree leaves return a small amount of beneficial nutrients and humus to the soil. You may need to mow 2 or 3 times over the same area and mow at a higher blade speed as well as a slower pace. In the long run it minimizes your efforts vs. raking and you don't need a special mulching blade to do this.

**IN ANY CASE, DO NOT MOW THE GRASS LOWER THAN NORMAL IN AN EFFORT TO MULCH MORE LEAVES. NEVER DO THIS!**



If you have a thick, wet leaf layer, try this: on a sunny day simply take a leaf rake and scatter the leaves over a sunlit area of your lawn, then wait a couple of hours for the leaves to dry. It may take a few times scattering them until they are dry enough to mow, but just “toss and turn”. After a relatively short time, you can mulch. This saves time raking, bagging, and paying to send them to the landfill. Give it a try in a small area and see how it goes.

Should you decide to mulch, the leaves tend to dull the mower blade. Be sure to sharpen the blade before putting away the mower for the winter. It's a small tradeoff for the time saved and benefits to your lawn.

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## Soil Service Garden Center, Inc.

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