



# The Daily Gleaner

## Green matters as you rake your leaves

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What a wonderful time of year - air is crisp and the colours are brilliant. But with the radiant colours comes the season for raking leaves in the yard. So after the kids have had their fun jumping in the piles, what is the most environmentally friendly way to get rid of your leaves?

For those who are on the fence about starting a backyard composter, fall presents a wonderful opportunity to get a head start. Inside your house or apartment, under your kitchen sink, you need a smaller kitchen container for your banana peels, egg shells and general food scrapings. This is referred to as the “greens” part of composting. The “browns” are such things as coffee filters, tea bags, and, you guessed it – leaves! The compost must be mixed equally greens with browns, and this time of year there is certainly no shortage of browns. What a great way to provide chemical-free all-natural compost for your lawn and garden next spring. For more information on how to compost, there is an excellent booklet by the New Brunswick Department of Environment entitled *Backyard Magic: The Composting Handbook*. This can be found online at <http://www.gnb.ca/0009/0372/0003/0001-e.asp>.

Of course if you have a much bigger lawn or a property with more trees, your backyard composter can fill up very quickly. So what do you do then? The extra leaves can be mulched and left on the lawn throughout the winter for fertilizer. If you do not have a mulching mower, you can use the lawn mower to mulch the leaves. The mulch will improve the health of trees and shrubs and increase their growth rate.

A tempting option is removing leaves from your lawn with a leaf blower. This device works for dry leaves, however with wet leaves and leaves in tight spaces the blower does not work as efficiently. Gas-powered leaf blowers emit noxious greenhouse gases, so if you must use one, make an effort to use an electric leaf blower only for hard to reach places, such as the gutter or the roof.

If you are putting your leaves curbside, look for biodegradable plastic bags. Biodegradable plastic bags break down in a matter of weeks. Because of this, their shelf life in stores is under one year to prevent disintegration within the box! Bag-To-Nature is a Canadian brand found at Sobeys stores and at Bird Stairs. These bags do not leak and are unaffected by moisture. They also degrade without leaving residues and are made from renewable resources. Check your local grocer for other 100% biodegradable plastic bags for roadside leaf pick up.

So what actually happens to your leaves after they're picked up? According to Fredericton's Public Works Department, leaf pick up service will be going on this week (until November 9<sup>th</sup> on your regular garbage day). They should be bagged in clear or orange plastic bags (currently biodegradable plastic bags are only offered in clear). They are taken to the compost site on Vanier Industrial Drive where the City's Parks and Trees department people make compost from them. The compost is used for flower beds and garden plots throughout the city. So when you're strolling around in the spring and see City workers planting new flower beds, you can be assured that the leaves you raked in the fall contributed to the beauty of Fredericton!

So Frederictonians, get outside and put your 'green' thumbs to work! The weather is beautiful, and not only is yard work great for the environment; it's also an invigorating form of exercise. Whether you make it a family affair with the kids helping, or just rock out to your favourite tunes on your headset, you'll feel great. Happy raking!

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