

October 2014

Love Our Lakes and Rivers: Compost Leaves - Don't Place Them near the Gutter

Another change in the season means the flaming colors of fall are beginning to blanket the treetops above. The delicious briskness in the air and migrating birds are now accompanied by spectacular shades of falling leaves all around us. Despite their vibrant colors, it's important to remember the water quality threats that leaves pose to Dane County lakes, rivers and streams. Amber piles of yard waste in the street during harvest season bring the green hue of algae blooms to our waters the following summer.

If you love the abundance of water resources we have been blessed with here in Dane County; Don't Leaf the Lakes! Keeping nutrient-rich grass clippings, leaves and other yard waste away from the street is the easiest way to help keep our waters clean. Otherwise wind and water direct stormwater runoff through leaves piled in the street. Even if the leaves never end up in the storm drain, a nutrient-rich "tea" is created when runoff passes through these leaves, and then drains into lakes and streams. These nutrients fertilize and promote algae growth.

Preliminary results from a four-year federal state and research project in our area show that phosphorus concentrations in runoff are much higher in fall in areas where municipalities do not conduct leaf pickup or street sweeping programs. Leaf removal from municipal streets is therefore a critical element in our phosphorus reduction work.

Instead of piling leaves in the street, consider composting your leaves and skipping municipal leaf collection all together. Take advantage of yard waste by making it an asset for

Madison Area Municipal Storm Water Partnership

your lawn and garden as a natural fertilizer. Compost leaves or use your lawn mower to mulch leaves directly onto your lawn. Minimize waste by spreading the mulch around trees, shrubs and gardens on your property. If you opt for municipal leaf collection and disposal, keep leaves on the terrace, not the street. Contact your local municipality for specific information on curbside pick-up dates and collection guidelines so that your leaves are at the curb for as short a time as possible.

No matter how far we live from the water's edge, storm drains or ditches near us lead to the nearest lake or stream, so each of us shares the responsibility of limiting nutrient growth in our lakes by keep leaves out of the street. Show your love for our lakes by displaying your very own "Love Your Lakes, Don't Leaf Them" yard sign. For more information, or to obtain yard signs visit www.myfairlakes.com or call 608-224-3764. Visit your local town/village/city hall and inquire about helpful tips, flyers and signs that emphasize the importance of eliminating algae-feeding nutrients from entering storm drains.

Love Your Lakes & Rivers Don't Leaf Them

cleanwaterbrightfuture.org

myfairlakes.com



Keep leaves out of the street.

Show your love for the lakes by placing this in your window or pick up a yard sign through myfairlakes.com.

The Madison Area Municipal Storm Water Partnership is working with the Rock River Stormwater Group to reduce the amount of pollution making its way to our lakes and streams. The Yahara chain of lakes and the Yahara River both ultimately drain to the Rock River. Both groups thank you for helping to Renew the Rock by reducing stormwater pollution throughout the Rock River area. Learn more at www.myfairlakes.com and www.renewtherock.com.

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