



PRESS RELEASE

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RAKE FOR THE SAKE OF OUR LAKES AND STREAMS!

No matter how pretty, autumn's falling leaves are not welcomed by their aquatic neighbors. If they fall or are raked onto the street, they will get washed into storm sewers and carried into our lakes and streams. As they decompose, phosphorus is released (the nutrient that turns our lakes and rivers green with algae) and oxygen is removed from the water.



In natural settings, phosphorus in fallen leaves is recycled back into the soil. But this recycling system is bypassed in urban areas where hard surfaces are connected to storm sewers. Even when residents live blocks away from a lake or river, the runoff from their yard and street eventually reaches local water bodies.

Keeping streets clean is one helpful way to keep our water clean. The City of Rochester deploys street sweepers to help remove sediments and debris from our city streets. Law requires residents to keep yard waste, including fall leaves and grass clippings, out of the street. In addition to degrading water quality, leaves can be a traffic hazard and they can cause flooding if they obstruct drainage ways or plug culverts, storm drains, or inlets and outlets to storm ponds.

Fall leaves aren't only a problem on the streets. Residents should not dump large piles of leaves onto hillsides, drainage ways, or public lands. Unless they are actively managed, piles of leaves cannot decompose readily. As they slowly rot, they can attract nuisance insects and animals. They can also block runoff or get washed downstream with storms, becoming a nuisance for the people and places below.

What residents can do to help "Keep It Clean" this Fall:

- Keep leaves out of the street, storm drains, and public lands.
- Mulch leaves in your yard or make a backyard compost site for them.
- Take leaves to the Olmsted County compost site, free of charge, at 305 Silver Creek Road NE, just across from the recycling center. (The site is open 7 days a week during daylight hours.)
- Place your waste and recycling bins on the boulevard rather than in the street. This will help facilitate the cleaning of the streets by City street sweepers.
- Remove debris from the storm drain if rain is on its way and the sweepers haven't yet passed. This will help prevent the drain from being clogged.

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