

PROPER RECYCLING LEAF AND YARD WASTE



A Guide to doing it right in Lawrence and Mercer Counties.

Almost every home generates yard waste. Pennsylvania defines yard waste as leaves, grass clippings, garden residue, tree trimmings, chipped shrubbery and other vegetative material. Together with food scraps, these organic materials make up almost 30% of our waste stream.

Municipalities with a population greater than 5,000 (mandated municipalities) are required to offer collection programs for "Leaf Waste". Pennsylvania defines Leaf Waste as leaves, garden residues, shrubbery and tree trimmings, and similar materials, but not including grass clippings. The reason grass clippings are not included is because grass gives off odors in the form of Ammonia if not properly managed. Facilities that accept grass clippings require a special, more stringent permit. Consequently, these facilities are not as common as Leaf Waste composting facilities.

Burning leaf and yard waste is illegal in mandated municipalities. For other municipalities, burning leaves is a violation of the Clean Air Act because of the harmful emissions and nuisance created from the smoke.

Yard waste blown or dumped into the street can block culverts and storm drains causing flooding and other issues. Chemical residues from yard waste fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides can also make their way into our waterways through improperly managed yard debris.

Residents have several options for dealing with yard waste.

Composting

Composting at home is an easy and inexpensive way to manage your yard waste and some food scraps (no meat, bones, or oily foods). The final product of composting is...compost! It is a great product that can be used as a soil amendment, mulch, or as part of a potting mix. Visit the County website and download our booklet "Compost: Keep it at Home" for more information.

 www.mercercountypa.gov/recycling

www.lawrencecountypa.gov/recycling

This publication is funded in part through a grant from the PA Department of Environmental Protection.



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Grasscycling

Grasscycling is easy, especially if you have a mulching mower. Simply cut the grass and leave the clippings lay. Grass clippings are high in Nitrogen. Leaving them lay prevents the removal of this valuable fertilizer and reduces the need to fertilize your lawn. Proper mowing is important with grasscycling. You may need to mow more frequently in the spring and less later in the year.

Chipper/Shredders

Chippers are used to break down wood into wood chips. Shredders are used to turn smaller materials such as twigs and leaves into a shredded material. There are different styles and strengths available. Light duty models are made to handle twigs and small branches while heavy duty models can handle thick branches. The final product can be used as a mulch or composted.

Municipal Curbside Collection

Mandated municipalities are required to provide seasonal curbside pickup of leaf and waste and provide other opportunities for residents throughout the rest of the year. Check with your municipality for your schedule. Place your material in brown yard waste bags as these bags are compostable. Most yard waste composting operations will not accept material in plastic bags because they require significant labor to open the bags and bags inevitably entangle and damage expensive equipment.

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