

BUCHANAN'S

NATIVE PLANTS

What to do with all those leaves

Leaves on your lawn: As leaves fall on your lawn, you should be diligent in raking them up as whole leaves are capable of smothering turf grass by blocking out valuable sunlight. To recycle the leaves, simply shred them by running over them several times with a lawn mower. Doing so returns organic matter and nutrients to your turf grass. This recipe is even more effective in an organic lawn.

Leaves in your beds: Leaves in your beds are really a blessing in disguise. They simply act as mulch by insulating the root zone of your plants, conserving water in the soil, and suppressing weeds. Having a layer of leaves around the base of your plants also provides habitat for a wide range of soil dwelling micro-arthropods and networks of fungi, encouraging a healthy and diverse range of soil life. Be sure no leaves layer upon and smother smaller ground covers or collect in the crotches of trees or shrubs.

In your vegetable beds, lay the leaves as mulch through winter, and turn them into the soil in spring with your warm season planting.

Leaves for compost: Leaves make great compost, but some take longer to break down than others, for example, oak leaves are much slower to compost than say a maple leaf. In any case, it can all go to compost. Balance the compost out with green matter, blood meal, or another nitrogen rich source to accelerate decomposition of leaves. Use a tumbling composter and Medina Plus to speed things along. Keep the compost slightly moist but not wet. When the compost has broken down to the point where you see little to no distinguishable remains of leaves in your compost, it's ready! Work into your beds or scatter thinly over your lawn and water in.