



*Leave
the
Leaves!*

Why Leave Them?

- 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.
- Avoid shredding leaves with a mower. Raking or blowing (electric) are alternatives that will keep leaves whole for the best cover and protect the insects and eggs already living there.
- In your vegetable beds, lay the leaves as mulch through winter, and turn them into the soil in spring with your warm season planting.

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- 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 Decom-9 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.

The background of the entire slide is a close-up photograph of a thick layer of fallen autumn leaves. The leaves are in various shades of brown, tan, and yellow, with some showing green veins. They are scattered and overlapping, creating a textured, naturalistic background.

Insects that Overwinter in Leaf Litter

- Moths- Luna Moths,
- Butterflies- Fritillaries, Swallowtails,
- American Bumblebees
- Fireflies**
- Native Bees
- Millipedes
- Eastern Red Bats
- Box Turtles
- Texas Tortoise

*Fireflies and Native Bees hide in leaf litter or burrow about 1-2" beneath the surface. Some bees will utilize hollow stems or dead wood.

#LEAVETHELEAVES