

Fact Sheet: Managing Fallen Leaves

Town of Hillsborough residents have several options for managing fallen leaves, including loose leaf and bagged collections by the town as well as various methods of composting or mulching. Keep in mind that leaves should always be kept out of streets and stormwater ditches.

Leaf litter can:

- Contribute significant amounts of phosphorus and nitrogen to local rivers and streams. While these nutrients are natural and can be beneficial, in excess they can cause harmful algae blooms and various water quality problems that adversely affect aquatic life and humans.
- Act like a funnel for excess nutrients when allowed to accumulate in stormwater drainage systems.
- Cause minor flooding by clogging storm drains and blocking storm pipes and ditches.

For collection by the town, loose and bagged leaves must be placed:

- Within 4 feet of the curb but not on the curb.
- Where they do not interfere with traffic or water drainage and do not block sidewalks, fire hydrants or water meters.

Loose leaf collection

From November through January, the town's leaf vacuum truck operates weekdays, except on town-observed holidays. The truck typically completes a cycle through town once a week, depending on the amount of leaves and weather.



Leaves must be free of trash, twigs and other debris. The collected leaves are used for composting or mulching; and sticks and other debris can clog and disable the collection truck's equipment.

Bagged leaf collection

Leaves may be bagged in paper or biodegradable bags for collection on brush collection days year-round. Households are limited to 10 bags per collection week.

Leaves and grass clippings must be free of trash and debris. The collected leaves are used for composting or mulching.

Composting or mulching

Composting or mulching leaves allows the nutrients to be recycled back into the soil and is environmentally better for soil enrichment than processed fertilizer. Processed fertilizer is highly water-soluble and can leach into waterways. It also can damage plants if applied too heavily because of the speed at which processed fertilizers are absorbed by plants. Decomposing leaves help improve the texture and long-term fertility of soil.

If composting leaves, use appropriate compost bins or containers to prevent them from blowing into streets or stormwater ditches. Leaves also can be mulched into lawns by grinding them with a lawn mower, or they can be raked around trees, shrubs or other plants to retain moisture in the soil. Leaves used around plantings should be thoroughly wetted down or covered in shredded wood, bark or another mulching material to keep them from blowing away.

Leaves collected by the town are available for mulching or composting. Call 919-296-9600 for more information.