



EARTH CARE @LEWINSVILLE

SOMETIMES LESS IS MORE

For many of us, autumn is a time for raking leaves and cleaning out garden beds. Best earth care guidance, however, is to “leave the leaves” and defer most garden clean-up until early spring. Decaying leaves and dead garden stalks, particularly those of native plants, greatly benefit our soil and insects, birds and other small animals that need these materials to complete their lifecycle, or for food and shelter in winter.

If you uncomfortable with a totally ‘au naturel’ look, or if you are worried about heavy leaf cover smothering your lawn, here are ways to tidy up somewhat while still benefitting the ecosystem:

- Rake excess leaves from the lawn to the bases of your trees and into your planter beds, leaving a light covering on the lawn to protect and enrich your soil.
- Or, use your mower to mulch leaves fallen on the lawn.
- Compost excess leaves and fallen sticks in a pile in your yard, if you have space. Otherwise, collect them in paper (not plastic) bags for removal by a service that composts yard waste or, like most NoVa County waste removal services, converts it to mulch.
- Remove any diseased material from bedding areas, and trim back very tall or gangly flower stalks, but leave as much as you can. Dried stalks add visual interest in winter, while providing habitat. And, most will pull up more easily in the spring, than in the fall.



Figure 1-Photo by Natsuki - Unsplash

Doing less will free you up to more fully enjoy the splendor of autumn and the wildlife that visits your garden. A win for all!

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