AUTUMN ADVICE: WHAT FALLS ON YOUR PROPERTY STAYS ON YOUR PROPERTY

FOR MORE BIRDS, BEES AND BUTTERFLIES….LEAVE THE LEAVES!

NATURE'S WAY: LET THE LEAVES LIE WHERE THEY LAND

Where you can, just leave the leaves. Fallen leaves make winter homes for caterpillars and various valuable bees, spiders and other insects. Leaves also make mulch that restores the nutrients in the soil and protects the plants in your garden beds and borders. Under trees, they can naturally help you reduce lawn by smothering the grass and making a new place to start shade-loving native plants in the spring. As long as the leaf layer is not too thick—3-4 inches or so—early spring flowers will have no trouble poking through. You can vary the depth of leaves depending on what is going to grow.

USE A RAKE AND MAKE MULCH

Rake up leaves from places where you want lawn and along walkways where you don't want matted, slippery leaves. Make a pile of leaves along the perimeter of your property or away from high-use or play areas around your house. You can use the leaves now or later as garden mulch or as an element in compost. Mowing leaves to chop them up is not recommended, since the insects living in them may be harmed.

MOW YOUR MEADOW LATER AND LESS

If you have a fields or meadow, put off mowing until just before frost to let pollinators take advantage of late-blooming goldenrod, asters and other plants. If you can, mow just one-third of your meadow every year so there will be dead stalks for bees to live in and seed heads for winter birds. Or leave islands of plants and grasses to keep these creatures happy.

PILE UP DEAD BRANCHES AND TWIGS

Fallen branches and trees make great homes for salamanders and toads and harbor insect food for birds. You can leave fallen limbs where they land if the spot is safe and appealing to you. Or you can pile dead branches into a brush pile where birds and small mammals can take shelter in wintery weather.

For more information visit these websites:

homegrownnationalpark.org
awaytogarden.com
pollinatorpathway.org