

## **Lawn & Garden Waste – Organic Gardening**

Organic gardening practices are ways of recycling organic matter into some of the best organic fertilizers and soil conditioner. This process helps to prevent a loss of topsoil, toxic runoff, water pollution, soil contamination, soil poisoning, death of insects, birds, critters and other beneficial soil organisms, as well as eliminating pesticide, herbicide, and fungicide residues on food from synthetic fertilizers. Some options to consider include:

### **Compost**

Garden compost turns leaves, grass clippings, and garden waste into a source of nutrients for your plants. Garden waste composting is low-maintenance and easy, and even those with small gardens can benefit.

A garden waste compost bin is different from a food waste compost bin. A garden waste compost is open to the elements, and is used only for leaves and plant materials, not for food.

Almost any underused space can be utilized for a garden waste compost. Find a location that is out of sight but still easy and convenient to access. Make sure that it is not against a building or a hedge. The spot needs to be level and to have good drainage, with soil or gravel at the base. Select a location that will likely be permanent, because moving a half-decayed compost pile can be messy and inconvenient.

Although garden waste can be composted in a large pile, a structure or bin to contain the compost and protect it from the elements is typically preferred. The size of the container can range from a garbage bin-sized to an enclosure made of scrap wood or discarded wood pallets, or a make yourself a wire leaf bin:



### **Grasscycling**

Grasscycling is the natural recycling of grass clippings by leaving them on the lawn after mowing. Grasscycling saves time, effort and, when done properly, is good for the environment and health of the grass.

Most homeowners can easily deal with leaves and grass clippings by recycling them on their property.

- Cutting no more than 1/3 the length of the grass, when the height is between 7 to 10 cm.
- Cutting when the grass is dry to the touch.
- Ensuring that the mower blade is sharp.
- Let grass clippings settle naturally onto the soil - if you've waited too long to mow or have clippings that are a couple of inches long and bunch together, rake and spread them across your lawn
- water thoroughly and infrequently to encourage grass to grow deep, extensive root systems.

### **Using Shredded Leaves**

If you have an abundant source of leaves in the fall, shred them. Your garden will benefit by:

- Insulation from winter elements by providing a 6-inch blanket of leaves to protect tender plants from wind and cold.
- Boost your compost pile with carbon-rich leaves balances high-nitrogen compost ingredients such as fresh grass clippings.
- Improve your soil by mix shredded leaves right into your garden and next spring your soil will be teeming with earthworms and other beneficial organisms.
- Make "leaf mold" compost, which is great for your soil and it's free! By simply keeping leaves in a plastic bag, a covered pile, or a hoop bin, they will slowly break down over the course of a year or two, resulting in leaf mold.

### **Let it Rot for Wildlife**

Keep some dead tree trunks and dead branches on living trees for woodpeckers, allow logs to rot in place for salamanders, and build a brush pile for squirrels. Rock piles, patches of long grass, and leaf litter are good habitat elements too. Downed wood holds valuable summer moisture and becomes organic soil that lets groundcovers thrive.