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Monthly Lawn Care Tips

NOVEMBER: *The Beauty of Autumn*

Fall is iconic—and, sometimes, obnoxious—for the swath of red, orange, yellow and brown deciduous leaves that litter the ground. But this shedding of foliage is more important to our yard's ecosystem than many of us may believe.

Falling Leaves

The process of shedding leaves is called *abscission*. When the cool weather sets in and sunlight wanes, the tree releases series of hormones that construct a cell barrier at the base of the leaf petiole—the stem where the leaf meets the tree branch—and block off any remaining glucose from traveling from the leaf to the tree. In cool temperatures, the glucose turns various shades of red. Any yellow color comes from an absence of chlorophyll in the leaf, while brown hues mean its skeletal structure is showing through.



Leaves Are Good for the Garden!

When these leaves fall to the ground, they are anything but a mess! Rather, they bring wondrous benefits to our home ecosystem. Here are the ways your leaves nurture your garden.

- **All-Natural Fertilizer:** Leaves are rich in carbon, trace amounts of glucose, and other nutrients that slowly feed our plants as they decompose.
- **Cheap and Cozy Mulch:** Piled at the base of our plants, or over tender tubers, leaves regulate soil temperature during the frosts of winter and help maintain even soil moisture. They can even keep weeds down when you spread them in open areas!
- **Soil Microbe Multivitamins:** Leaves give our soil microbes, fungi, and nematodes plenty to eat during the cool winter months, resulting in the plant fertilizer mentioned above.
- **Insect Habitat:** Leaf litter—especially when piled high—is a warm, dry, and food-rich habitat for spiders, butterfly larvae, ladybugs, and countless other beneficial insects that need a place to hibernate until spring.
- **Bird Buffet:** Speaking of insect habitat... leaf litter is an excellent place for overwintering bird populations to forage for a winter snack!

Ways to Use Your Leaves

So stow the leaf blower and rake up these carboniferous all-stars off your lawn and low-growing plants to store them in wheelbarrows or paper yard waste bags for year-round use in your yard.

- **Compost:** Mix leaves with grass clippings at a 1:3 ratio to get spectacular yard waste compost!
- **Worm Bins:** Keep some leaves to mix into your worm bin when it gets smelly or overly wet. Red wigglers love leaf litter!
- **Mulch:** Cover open areas, such as flower beds, vegetable gardens, or just plain empty soil, with a thick blanket of leaves to control cool-weather weeds.
- **Pet Habitats:** Drop a few leaves into a pet gecko, frog, or even shrimp habitat to



replicate an outdoor habitat inside. Be sure to rinse leaves once or twice with warm water and then let them dry to remove any insects, feces, or other residue.

NOTE: if a deciduous tree or shrub is ailing from anthracnose or another contagious disease, it is best to collect those leaves and place them directly in the curbside yard waste bin.

So, enjoy this year's crop of leaves, for their color, their abundance and their life giving properties!

Fertilizing

Fertilization is a perfect example of maintenance for landscapes. It is one of those regular things that you simply cannot afford to neglect. Every year, as the end of autumn approaches, you should apply a final dose of fertilizer to your grass. The lawn will absorb those nutrients and they will help to keep it strong, healthy throughout the winter, and ready to explode into growth when things warm up again.

Let Nature Water

It is time to turn off your irrigation service and allow Mother Nature to take care of watering your lawn. It is important to properly shut down your irrigation system, and this is a service that Natural Concept Landscape can do for you.

Aerating the Lawn

Aerate the grassy area before the year's first freeze. As winter comes, thatch will accumulate and your lawn can be "choked off." A serious aeration and that aforementioned fall fertilization will prepare your lawn to last out the cold and will position in for maximum spring performance. You can rent an aerator at any hardware store, if you do not own your own. Some people claim to get more than satisfactory results from manual aeration strategies, including special slip-on shoe cleats. Give your lawn a chance to breathe through the winter and it will thank you in the spring.

Winter Clean Up

If your lawn is smothered in any location, it can do a great deal of harm. Before the really cold weather sets in, walk your property and carefully remove any debris from the lawn. Things like tree branches, an old hose, your children's toys or that tool you have been meaning to put back into the garage can do serious damage if left in place through the winter. Smothered grass is less disease resilient and may even die completely. You certainly do not want to bring in spring with a brown ring in the middle of the yard!



In Conclusion

Every step of the way, Natural Concept Landscape is here to assist you with all of your lawn and garden care needs. We offer free consultations and excellent maintenance programs for a very affordable price. We are in the business of making your life a little greener, a little easier, and a lot more enjoyable. We are just a phone call away!

Enjoy the beauty of Autumn!