



## Leave the leaves

Turkey beckons. Temps are dropping. And leaves are adding color to our lawns. But let's slow down on the rush to the garage for the rake. In fact, why don't we skip the rake altogether?

That's right. What if—gasp!—you didn't rake the leaves? What if this year we all started a new trend of leaving the leaves (pun intended).

Evidence shows that fallen leaves are best left right where they land! They help the environment and promote the natural order of things.

According to an [October article by NPR](#), three reasons make this a bad idea:

1. Raking leaves and bagging them adds unnecessary waste to landfills. The article's author found that EACH YEAR 8 MILLION TONS of bagged leaves end up in landfills.
2. Fallen leaves provide nutrients for the grass and soil! According to the article, the nutrients include potassium, nitrogen, and phosphorus, all of which help the grass and provide good food for the ground to thrive.
3. Fallen leaves become seasonal habitats. Spiders, slugs, and even some tiny turtles and other mammals use the fallen leaves for their temporary homes.

If you are super attached to your rake, scientists recommend thinning the leaves so they're not in dense layers—which impedes sunlight. And yes, go ahead and make a big pile somewhere so your dogs and kids can experience the pure delight of jumping into a giant pile of leaves. (There's nothing like it.) Then, spread the leaves around to help make temporary housing for those critters and to help feed the grass and soil (and what's left of your big pile eventually will break down in place).

Go ahead! Jump into a leaf pile and spread those leaves to help the planet thrive naturally!

Enjoy the leaves!