

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

How to use fall leaves in next year's garden:

Some gardeners may become overwhelmed with the amount of fall leaves on the ground once the seasons start to change, especially those gardeners that may live in heavier wooded areas, but these leaves can be put to good use in the garden and aren't as much of a hassle as they seem. Fall leaves are considered organic matter, which can be greatly beneficial to your garden. The leaves contain trace minerals, since the trees draw up these minerals with their roots deep in the soil. If you add leaves to the garden, they will feed earthworms and other beneficial microorganisms.



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Ways to use the leaves:

Other ways to use fall leaves is they can lighten up heavy soil, or they can help sandy soil retain moisture. They also make a good, free mulch to add around your flower beds. Add the leaves to your compost pile to add more nitrogen. They can also be used as insulation for those plants that may not be as hardy as others.

What to do with the leaves once they fall:

There are several ways a garden can put those fall leaves to work and there are a few simple steps to make sure you reap the most benefits from the leaves. First, after you collect the leaves, shred them. If you don't have a leaf shredder, pile the leaves in the lawn and drive over them several times with your lawn mower and that should work just fine. Shredding the leaves increases the surface area and also makes sure the leaves won't get packed together and soggy.

After you shred the leaves, rake them up.

You can put them in a trash bag to store until the spring to add as a mulch to flower beds, or you can keep them to mulch tender plants that aren't as hardy and need to withstand the cold months. For those who don't get to shredding and bagging all their leaves, especially those in wooded areas, you can add the whole leaves to the compost bin to balance out the food scraps from your kitchen. The leaves will keep the compost pile from getting too compacted, as well.

To make leaf mold:

Leaf mold is what shredded, stored leaves become after one to three years. This can be made with shredded or whole leaves, but the shredded leaves will decompose faster and become leaf mold more quickly. Leaf mold is high in calcium and magnesium and it is better than peat moss in which it retains three to five times its weight in water.

Leaves not to use:

Only put walnut, eucalyptus and camphor leaves in your compost because they can inhibit growth if you use them as mulch.



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