

Mayor's Column
October 10, 2017

It is that time of year again; crisp air, pumpkins, freshly picked apples and falling leaves.

Our leaf collecting begins mid-month continuing until early December. Almost incredulous, our annual leaf removal costs regularly top \$100k per season and this does not include the additional cost of repairing clogged drains as rainstorms routinely send the leaves directly into our storm sewer system. Drains clogged with leaves also vastly increase the risk of localized flooding.

We continue to ask you to embrace the LELE "Love 'Em and Leave 'Em" program of mulching in place that so many of our neighboring communities have adopted.

The program, initiated in the Village of Irvington, is an effort to change habits and realize that our fall ritual of disposing leaves curbside is actually wasteful, expensive and unnecessary. There are multiple advantages to simply mowing the leaves back into the lawn.

There is a significant cost savings to the Village for fall leaf collection and disposal. As example, Irvington has calculated their costs associated with leaf removal and Bronxville's expenditures are much the same. They spend \$30K in dumping fees alone for vacuuming up and carting leaves away Upstate. Combined with labor costs, equipment maintenance and gas, hence the seasonal cost of \$100K.

Mulching in place will also greatly eliminate the need for leaf blowers which may be used again in the Village starting on October 1st. Leaf blowers not only generate significant noise and particulate matter, but the power of the engine at 150 mph – 200 mph is akin to a jet plane and will systematically remove layers of soil leaving yards pristine but extremely unhealthy.

Mulched leaves are a low cost way to naturally fertilize one's lawn and landscape beds. Mulched leaves increase the water retention capacity of soil, especially useful for absorbing rainwater run-off. Mulch increases the nutrients in the soil as well as the biological activity of earthworms, microbes and other beneficial organisms. Leaf mulch is more nutritious and safer than commercial products.

Most commercial mulch is actually the by-product of dead trees which have often died from diseases.

Mulch as a natural fertilizer eliminates the need for commercial products which can prove dangerous to pets and the purity of our water systems.

When the piles of leaves on the streets begin to decay, harmful phosphates and nitrogen are released eventually ending up in our sewer system and ultimately the Bronx River.

These same leaf piles are also a significant traffic hazard as they are often placed in narrow roadways creating a slippery road surface.

Gardening companies already own the low cost mulching blade and can retrofit mowers quite easily. Most new residential grade mowers also now come with a mulching blade for home gardeners at a nominal cost.

If you choose not to participate in the mulch in place initiative, leaves must remain at curb's edge but on private property so our vacuum truck can easily collect them. Yard waste such as branches and shrub trimmings cannot be comingled with the leaves as they will clog the leaf truck. They should be placed curbside in biodegradable bags.

This is also the time of year to discuss any changes in the care of your property with your landscape professional. We urge you, like the Village, to opt for organic lawn care products. They are not more costly and most area landscapers have the capability, if they are given enough lead time, to order the proper materials. If each homeowner committed to the organic approach, we could greatly decrease the airborne carcinogens and limit the contaminants in our water run-off that go directly into our drainage systems.

The fall also signals the return of all the children to our Village for school and play. In order to increase the safety of all those now walking about the Village, our Village-wide speed limit is 30 mph, the lowest allowed by New York State. The only exemption is the 20 mph permitted in marked school zones. Any further speed reduction requires New York State legislation which must be predicated on documented evidence of accident rates, speeding data and traffic volume, something the Village cannot demonstrate.

In spite of repeated requests from residents, the Village cannot install “Children at Play” or “Slow Children” signs because State and Federal standards reject their use as they openly suggest that playing in the street is acceptable and give children a false sense of security. On the other hand, signs that alert drivers to playgrounds are encouraged because the parks are often located in places where a reasonable driver would not expect a large group of children. Sagamore Park is a prime example.

Finally, it is also election season with important local positions contested including that of County Executive, County Legislator and Town Supervisor.

If you are unsure of your polling place, please click on this link for more details.

<http://citizenparticipation.westchestergov.com/find-polling-place>

There are four polling locations in the Village:

Concordia College, Districts 16 & 17

The Reformed Church, Districts 18, 19 & 21 (**formerly at Bronxville School**)

Christ Church, District 20

NYP Lawrence Hospital, District 22

This is a County run election and any questions regarding the election should be directed to the County Board of Elections at 914-995-5285.