



# The Daily Gleaner

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## **‘Greening’ your Fall Leaf Pickup**

This week I really took notice that the trees that were so vibrant with colour just a few weeks ago, are now gray and bare. And though some trees have yet to shed their leaves completely, many of us have already begun our annual ritual of raking, mulching and bagging leaves.

This year bagging leaves will be slightly different for the residents of Sunshine Gardens who have agreed to be part of a pilot project with the City of Fredericton. Residents of approximately 100 homes in the area along Parkhurst Drive, from Hanwell Road to Rookwood Avenue, including all the courts off Parkhurst will be using compostable bags to bag their leaves during the annual Fall Leaf Pickup Campaign. During the campaign, which runs from November 3-14, half of the test group will receive compostable paper bags while the other half will receive compostable plastic bags to bag leaves collected from their yards. The City is conducting this pilot project to determine if compostable bags are a practical way to help protect the environment, and make it easier for the City to recycle and compost fallen leaves. Sunshine Gardens was chosen as the pilot project area because of the large number of mature hardwood trees in the neighborhood.

Each year the City of Fredericton picks up approximately 400 tonnes of bagged leaves. So in an effort to reduce waste and the amount of empty plastic leaf bags filling our landfill, the City is hoping this pilot project proves successful and expands into a City-wide initiative to make our community greener. Currently, most homeowners use traditional plastic bags to gather their leaves; these bags are collected and then have to be ripped open and discarded in the landfill as they are too dirty to recycle. As you can imagine, this also proves to be quite labour intensive.

So now you ask, what is done with the leaves? You will be happy to know that our city does not simply dump them into the landfill. Leaves from the Fall Leaf Pickup are collected and taken to the municipal composting facility located in the Vanier Industrial Park. The leaves help form the basis of the city compost program. This made-in-Fredericton compost is used as a soil amendment for shrub and flowerbeds in City parks; and also used as a component of rich topsoil in neighbourhood green spaces.

Of course, there are other options to bagging your leaves. You can use them as a light covering of mulch in your garden and flowerbeds to provide extra nutrients. You can also compost the leaves in your backyard composter (or leave a pile beside your composter to use as ‘browns’ throughout the year and layer with kitchen organic waste). Regular composting is extremely environmentally friendly as it can remove up to 75% of regular household waste that traditionally ends up in the landfill. It makes a great organic fertilizer for the garden and may save you some money in the spring when you don’t have to buy compost and fertilizer from a store.

Compost helps improve the texture of soil and increase a sandy soil’s moisture holding capacity. It also helps maintain a healthy soil pH so that plants grow better and lawns stay greener. A compost covering

also helps your flower and shrub beds cope with stresses from drought and frosty temperatures. If you are still a little hesitant to start composting or if you are having trouble with your compost, there is a team of volunteers in the Fredericton area known as the Fredericton Backyard Composters who can help you. Go to the [www.fredericton.ca](http://www.fredericton.ca) click on 'Environment' then 'Composting' to learn more about the benefits of composting and to get some 'how to' tips ensure your composting is successful.

And remember, if you get tired of bagging your leaves, or if you miss the November 3 to 14 Fall Leaf Pickup deadline, don't continue to sit your leaf bags on the curb for pick up as you may find they end up getting buried in snow. Choose instead to get out your lawn mower and mulch your remaining leaves so the mulch can lay on your lawn for the winter, providing nutrients to help it come back to health in the spring.

*Valerie Hillier is a Frederictonian who is always looking for ways to shrink her environmental footprint. For more information on how you can do, go to [www.greenmattersfredericton.ca](http://www.greenmattersfredericton.ca).*