



Options for leaf removal:

Composting at home will help protect the environment. It will save money and at the same time improve the soil, all with little or no effort.

1. Composting leaves, yard clippings and food scraps will transform organic material naturally and over time it will become nutrient rich soil called humus.
2. Bag leaves and pay to have them hauled away by a company. There are several reliable companies waiting to serve any leaf removal needs.
3. Some towns provide removal services. If you live within the city limits, please contact the city or waste manager directly.
4. Burning leaves is fine, but please try to burn above the high water line and do not put ashes into any lake, river, or stream. Always call for approval from local Fire Departments before burning

Please see our website for resources about composting, municipal city information, and a list of reliable contractors at: www.lakeozarkmasternaturalist.com

Top 10 reasons to not dump leaves in the lake.

1. Decaying leaf litter releases nutrients in the water. These nutrients can cause algae blooms that are harmful for fish, pets and humans.
2. Decomposing leaves use oxygen needed by fish.
3. Once the oxygen is used, anaerobic processes start, causing a rotten egg smell.
4. Leaves block sunlight needed for microbes, fish and aquatic plants
5. It is unpleasant to swim in water full of leaf litter.
6. Leaves on the water surface make it harder to fish
7. Leaves can be composted and used for gardens
8. Chopped up leaves can be used as mulch for your yard
9. Leaves deposited in the lake migrate downstream, and eventually get trapped in the fish net at Bagnell dam.
10. Leaves collect at the back of coves, trapping sediment and make these areas shallower.

Managing Leaves at the Lake

Missouri's quality of life flows from its abundant natural resources. Together, Missouri's citizens can ensure the quality of the state's land, water, and air by disposing of leaves properly.

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WHY ARE LEAVES BAD FOR OUR WATERWAYS AND WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT THEM?

If you've been visiting Lake of the Ozarks since childhood, you may have helped your grandparents push fall leaves from waterfront lawns into the lake or river. You grew up believing that's the right way to dispose of leaves. You may have even advised newcomers to do what your grandparents did.

Leaves affect water quality.

The only leaves that belong in our rivers and lakes are those dropped there by nature. Here is why blowing in piles of leaves can be harmful to fish, pets and humans.

First, too many leaves disrupt nature's balance. A thick leaf cover on the surface of the water prevents sunlight from reaching important microbes that process and release nutrients. The nutrients are used by aquatic plants, while the microbes are food for shad and paddlefish.

Second, decomposition of large amounts of leaf litter reduces oxygen in the water. This will cause the release of sulfur dioxide, producing a rotten egg smell. Low oxygen levels are also lethal for fish.

Third, leaf litter reduces water clarity. Decomposing leaves release nutrients that feed algae. This can cause an algae bloom. Nobody wants to swim or boat in water the color of pea soup!

Finally, clean, clear water at the Lake of the Ozarks is vital to our local economy. Millions of tourists visit the lake annually. We can all do our part to keep extra leaves out of the lake and protect our property values, businesses and visitors.

Compost or burn those leaves?

So what can homeowners and lawn crews do instead of pushing leaves into our water?

They can turn leaves into compost, a nutrient for soil.

They can bag them for disposal at a composting facility.

Burning leaves is an option for homeowners at the Lake of the Ozarks. Burning should take place above the eroded bank whenever possible. Ash and burned leaf residue reduces the oxygen that fish and aquatic insects need to thrive.

Always make sure there is no open burn ban in effect before burning.



Dispose of leaves properly for the good of our waterways.

When working with landscape contractors, ask about their leaf disposal policy. It is illegal for commercial providers to dispose of leaves into the lake. Find a contractor who disposes of leaves responsibly and legally.

When leaves fall on your property, compost or burn them. Make sure the ash residue will not wash into the lake. Missouri's waterways will be healthier far into the future when you do.