



FALL YARD WORK

**Try a new, easier fall clean-up in the garden**

Sigrie Kendrick - Oct 26, 2022 / 11:00 am



Photo: Contributed

Instead of rushing to rake up the leaves under your drought-resistant Amur maple this fall, let them lie and compost into a soil-fertilizing mulch.

Leave the leaves.

I'm here to question why, as gardeners, we are so obsessed with the big fall clean-up, including raking or blowing all the fallen leaves into piles, shovelling them into plastic bags and sending them off to the landfill—or even to be composted centrally.

It's a tradition we really should re-consider. In fact, it is counter-productive behaviour. Instead, I would like to educate everyone about the many benefits of leaving the leaves where they fall in the fall.

Let us mimic what occurs naturally, in contrast to our need to clean, control and manipulate our natural environment.

There's a reason for everything in nature. For example, with the shorter days of light in the fall, the leaves of deciduous trees and shrubs fall to the ground and act as a mulch, which suppresses weeds, protects the roots of perennials from the winter cold and feeds the soil as they decay.

Leaving your tree, shrub and perennial "mess" in place over the winter provides a source of food and sanctuary for a whole host of small mammals, birds and insects.

If you can't bear the sight of the perceived mess, consider adding your fallen leaves to your own compost. They will serve as the "brown" component of your compost. Add the last of your grass clippings to provide the "green" component and you are on your way to making nutritious compost that can be used for top-dressing your garden next season.

Improving your soil health is one of the seven principles of xeriscape and is an important step in creating soil with better structure and moisture-holding capabilities.

Visit [okanaganxeriscape.org](http://okanaganxeriscape.org) to learn more about the principles of xeriscape. Read our blog, peruse our plant database and and learn about the many benefits of membership in the Okanagan Xeriscape Association.

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Last weekend, volunteers, board members and contractors planted almost 150 new shrubs and perennials in a new area of the UnH2O Xeriscape Demonstration Garden, located in front of the H2O aquatic centre on Gordon Drive in Kelowna.

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association is excited to showcase these new plantings, so why not stop by and check out our progress as this new xeriscape demonstration bed evolves?

If you live across the big lake, consider visiting our recently-opened West Kelowna Xeriscape Spirit Square Garden, located at Westbank Centre Park on May Street.

The OXA is extremely grateful for the ongoing financial support of the Okanagan Basin Water Board and is proud to be collaborating with it on its Make Water Work campaign.

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*This article is written by or on behalf of an outsourced columnist and does not necessarily reflect the views of Castanet.*

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