

Town of Gates

Supervisor
Cosmo A. Giunta

Highway Superintendent
Kurt Rappazzo, P.E.



Town Council
Lee A. Cordero
Christopher B. DiPonzio
Andrew Loughlin
Steve Tucciarello

April 19, 2024

RE: Leaf Pickup

Dear Resident,

The Town will not be picking up the leaves in front of your home this spring. Leaf season is in the fall. In the past, the Town would pick up leaves in the spring as a courtesy, especially when the fall pickup was shortened by the early onset of winter. Such was not the case this past fall, when the Highway Department picked up leaves over the course of eight (8) weeks. We started in late October and worked through the middle of December, 10 hours a day, 6 days a week including holidays. We made nine (9) trips around the Town, and picked up every leaf that was put out at the road.

The last few years have been like that, and yet we're noticing a disturbing trend: More and more people not raking in the fall, and waiting until they clean their yards in the spring. We cannot let leaf pickup in the spring become the norm. This would be detrimental to the Town for two reasons:

1. There is nowhere for the Town to take leaves in the spring. In the fall, we take the leaves to vendors who process them over the winter for re-use in the spring. These vendors have no use for leaves in the spring. With no place to take them, we'd have to store them somewhere in Town where they will rot and smell until we can ship them out in the fall.
2. Spring pickup delays our other services. In the fall, the entire Highway Department is dedicated to picking up leaves. If we did that in the spring, we would be prevented or delayed from such things as: fixing potholes, repairing plow damage, removing dead trees, clearing out drainage swales, improving our parks, or starting our concrete sidewalk and gutter replacement and road programs.

You are probably wondering what now to do with the leaves currently in front of your home. Here are some options for you to consider:

- You can rake them back into your yard, and mulch them with your lawn mower. The local Cornell Cooperative Extension says that leaf mulching can reduce the need for fertilizer, improve percolation for better rain management, and improve grass health. Visit <https://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/resources/benefits-of-leaf-mulching> for more information; or
- You can use them, along with fruit and vegetable scraps or grass clippings, to make your own compost, which you can use in flower and garden beds, or fix damaged lawns instead of expensive fertilizers and topsoil. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a guide to get you started at <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home>; or
- You can either put the leaves in your garbage tote, or in plastic bags, for collection by your refuse company. They will dispose of them in a landfill where they will harmlessly decompose. Please let us know if your refuse company refuses to take your leaves, as that would be a violation of their license with the Town.



We appreciate your cooperation in keeping leaf pickup a fall activity; leaving spring pickup as a backup option in case of the early onset of winter. When the Town returns to pickup leaves in the fall, we ask that everyone rakes early and often. It's the best way to make the most of our leaf program.

Sincerely,

Kurt Rappazzo, P.E.
Director of Public Works/Highway Superintendent
Town of Gates