

Five Reasons Not to Blow Leaves into Wetlands or Waterways

By Lillian Willis

Property owners should let anyone who works with them or for them know that leaf material should not be blown or dumped into any river, pond, or wetland. Dumping in those sensitive areas can have serious consequences.

1. Excess leaves can clog culverts, fill ponds or the backside of a dam, and make the river shallower and more prone to flooding or the need for expensive dredging.
2. Shallower waterways and ponds make the water warmer, thereby discouraging fish and encouraging unsightly algal blooms.
3. Excess leaves can produce organic loading and create an organic imbalance. As insects work to process the material, they expel nutrients that over-enrich downstream ponds and Long Island Sound, cause algal blooms, and deplete oxygen - sometimes causing fish kills.
4. Repeated dumping into a watercourse or wetland over a period of time without a permit is considered filling and can incur a fine from the local Inland Wetland Board.
5. Besides increasing environmental problems, dumping leaves - instead of composting them or broadcasting them into woodlands to decompose naturally - eliminates a source of rich soil beneficial to gardens and healthy landscapes.

Proper disposal of leaves - by composting or broadcasting into woodlands - is one easy way for each person to make a difference to our important waterways and wetlands.