

# LEAVES: NATURE'S TREASURES



## CONSERVATION COMMISSION

TOWN OF GREENWICH, CT



### Why leaf recycling/reusing?

Leaves are important organic matter, which contain nutrients and minerals. During the decomposition process, leaves return these valuable elements back to the soil. For many years, leaves have been collected from streets and hauled away. This approach is **costly, unsustainable** and **wastes valuable natural resource**.

The best solution to this problem is through recycling and reusing. **Leaves shredded** into a lawn during mowing are incorporated directly into the soil. Shredded leaves decompose to improve the soil structure, moisture and microbial balance. **Excess leaves can be composted** in bins. The composting process requires sources of nitrogen and carbon. Leaves are a great source of carbon; therefore, if composted alone, it will take more than one season for them to fully decompose. Partially decomposed leaves turn into a **leaf mold**, which is a great organic mulch and could be used for flower beds, around trees, and other planted areas. This valuable organic matter protects root systems, preserves soil moisture, moderates temperatures and protects soil from the damaging effects of wind and rain erosion. Leaf mold also suppresses weeds and diseases, and provides food and shelter for beneficial soil organisms. When sources of nitrogen such as kitchen scraps are added, leaves placed in the bins turn into a compost relatively quickly.

**Compost** can be used to amend soil in gardens because it is rich in nutrients and minerals, and improves soil aeration, structure, moisture and microbial content. Compost is not only a healthier choice for plants, but also it reduces the need for fertilizer and pesticides. In addition, its application reduces demand for water, enriches the soil and reuses free leaves collected at the site.

#### Other benefits of leaf recycling/reusing:

- Reduces cost of leaf collection and disposal
- Decreases road hazards caused by leaf piles
- Reduces flooding caused by clogged street drains
- Improves air quality by cutting down on leaf blowing
- Reduces noise pollution
- Replaces synthetic fertilizer with natural nutrient rich organic compost
- Encourages more sustainable land care practices
- Creates free mulch and nutrients
- Enhances health of plants and soil
- Reduces organic wastes
- Prevents cross-contamination with invasive plant seeds
- Avoids leaf contamination caused by street runoff