

YARD WASTE

PROPER DISPOSAL OF YOUR LEAVES AND GRASS CLIPPINGS

Why Can't Yard Waste Go Into The Storm Sewer?

Yard waste and other pollutants can be carried through the storm sewer system and be deposited directly into our streams and rivers. What enters the City of Rockford's storm sewer system will enter our creeks, rivers and other water untreated possibly affecting our drinking water as well as recreational activities.



Leaves and Grass Clippings In The Storm Sewer Will Cause:

- Increased potential for flooding. Leaves and grass clippings can plug the storm sewer system reducing its capacity to transport and receive storm water.
- Excess nutrients from fertilizer, yard waste and leaves can cause algae blooms.

The Do's and Don'ts While Disposing of Yard Waste

Yard clean-up usually means having to deal with an abundance of leaves and grass clippings.

Things to avoid when disposing of yard waste include:

- Never allow yard waste to be washed down or put into storm drains, detention areas, or drainage ways
- Do not sweep or blow grass clippings along the street or into a storm drain
- Improper disposal of yard waste increases the accumulation of debris which in turn leads to blockages that can cause nuisance flooding
- Overwatering your lawn or garden may increase leaching of fertilizers to ground and surface water
- REMEMBER sweep excess fertilizers back into your yard, not into the street or sidewalk



City of Rockford Weekly Compost/Yard Waste Pick-Up

Yard waste pick-up occurs only during spring, summer and fall when plants are growing. A press release is sent out in the fall and spring advising when yard waste pick-up will resume. A notice will also be placed on the City of Rockford web page.

Residential yard waste pick-up occurs the same day as your regularly scheduled garbage pick-up. Yard Waste material must be placed in compostable paper bags or in 30 gallon refuse cans that have been marked with a large "X" that is plainly visible from the street. Twigs, branches and other types of large brush that cannot fit into either of these containers must be placed in bundles no more than 4 feet long by 2 feet in diameter and not exceeding 25 pounds. Bundles should be tied with string or twine, not metal. Yard waste cannot be mixed with regular garbage nor placed in plastic bags for pickup.



Leaf burning in Winnebago County and within City of Rockford limits is illegal. Leaves can be collected the same as your other yard waste and picked up during your regularly scheduled garbage day. It is illegal to sweep leaves into the streets as they clog both street sweepers and storm sewer drains which can cause flooding in the spring.

Options for using leaves and grass clippings at home include:

- Adding them to your compost pile.
- Mow grass higher and leave clippings on the lawn to retain moisture and provide nutrients as they decompose.
- Leaves make an excellent mulch for use around trees and shrubs, or in flower and vegetable gardens, helping to slow the growth of weeds and retain moisture

Composting

Compost is simply decomposed organic material. The organic material can be plant material or animal matter. While composting may seem mysterious or complicated, it's really a very simple and natural process that continuously occurs in nature, often without any assistance from mankind. If you've ever walked in the woods, you've experienced compost in its most natural setting. Both living plants and annual plants that die at the end of the season are consumed by animals of all sizes, from larger mammals, birds, and rodents to worms, insects, and microscopic organisms. The result of this natural cycle is compost, a combination of digested and undigested food that is left on the forest floor to create rich, usually soft, sweet-smelling soil.



Backyard composting is the intentional and managed decomposition of organic materials for the production of compost, that magical soil enhancer that is fundamental to good gardening. Anyone can effectively manage the composting process. In fact, if you have organic matter, it's virtually impossible to prevent decomposition. The trick is to maximize the process of decomposition, while avoiding the unpleasant effects of the natural process of decaying matter. Compost is good; sloppy garbage heaps and rotting food is bad.

For more information about composting go to www.HowToCompost.org.

Why Care About Clean Water?

Storm water pollution is one of the greatest threats to Rockford's creeks and rivers. Clean water means safe drinking water, places for recreation, commercial opportunities, healthy wildlife habitats, and adds beauty to the landscape. Rain washes pollution from streets, parking lots and lawns into storm sewers and drainage ditches then directly to our streams, rivers and ultimately, the ocean.

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For More Information about the City of Rockford's Storm Water Programs go to:
<https://rockfordil.gov/city-departments/public-works/engineering-division/stormwater-environmental-team/>



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