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## When Leaves Fall

When leaves fall in your yard, how do you clean them up?

Leaf blowers help make a landscaper's job easier and faster, saving landscape maintenance companies time and potentially a significant amount of money. Homeowners also use leaf blowers to make the job of maintaining their yard easier. It's simple to see why people are in love with leaf blowers, but...and there's always a *but*...leaf blowers do come with a cost besides its price tag.

Leaf blowers can be health hazards. First of all, emissions of gas-powered leaf blowers are thick in a concentrated area. The amount of pollution spewing out a two-stroke gas-powered blower is like driving 350 miles in a newer model gas-powered car. While a car emits that pollution over a long stretch of road, the leaf blower may concentrate it all in one yard or neighborhood. Secondly, leaf blowers kick up swirling clouds of airborne debris, dust, pollen, and mold spores that pollute the air. Using leaf blowers, especially gas-powered ones, can cause asthma attacks, respiratory infections, heart attacks, and increase visits to emergency rooms for sensitive individuals. (By the way, those white painter's masks won't help keep out the tiny particles that cause the health problems.)

When leaves fall off your trees this fall, think about using alternatives to gas-powered leaf blowers, or choose your blowers and settings wisely, such as:

- Using manual rakes and brooms;
- Using electric vacuum blowers;
- Limiting the power or air speed on blowers to remove leaves and not dirt;
- Using smaller blowers instead of commercial-sized blowers; and
- Reducing or avoiding the need to remove leaves by using desert landscaping.

If you ditch the leaf blower, now you've got to eek out more time from your day to maintain your yard. Make it a family affair. Invent a game or hold a competition to make the time fun, or even use money as incentives to get kids to do a good job. If you prefer to make it a more private experience, take advantage of the mindless task to relax, put your favorite music on, enjoy the clean air, feel good about doing your part to beautify your neighborhood without loud polluting machines, and breathe. You can even count it as exercise.

Our actions make a difference. Find tools other than leaf blowers to maintain your yard. And if you hire landscapers to maintain your yard, hire ones who either refrain from using blowers, or use them in ways that minimize emissions and airborne dust.

**Questions or Concerns?** Click or call: <[www.deq.pima.gov/air/pcneap/Dust\\_info.htm](http://www.deq.pima.gov/air/pcneap/Dust_info.htm)>, e-mail <[karen.wilhelmsen@deq.pima.gov](mailto:karen.wilhelmsen@deq.pima.gov)>, or 740-3340.

## **Got Dust? Keep it Down!**

### **Ideas for Yard Maintenance Fun:**

- See who can collect the most different types of leaves and weeds.
- Pay a penny for each weed pulled or leaf collected.
- Collect the leaves and save a portion of them for arts and crafts projects. You can showcase the artwork on your refrigerator gallery or have a special viewing scheduled.
- Take the dimensions and weight of bags of debris.
- Take before, during, and after photos.
- Measure and track information on paper and refer to it on future yard maintenance days. You can announce an all-time record for leaf gathering, laugh at the most absurd thing ever found in your front yard, or compare total number of pounds collected at each event.
- Award prizes for a variety of factors such as the largest and smallest leaves found, biggest pile, etc.
- Remember to celebrate afterwards with a special treat, and enjoy the extra time you found to play with your family and/or friends.