



A Message from the Lake Hopatcong Commission:

As the autumn leaves fall, the Lake Hopatcong Commission offers the following reminders to homeowners within the watershed on how to properly dispose of leaves and vegetative waste. Leaves should never be blown or raked directly into Lake Hopatcong. Although some may think it is silly to worry about any single home's impact on the lake, in reality it is the cumulative effect of everyone working together for the health of our lake that makes a difference.

Leaves are organic and consist of carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorus. These are exactly the same components that help aquatic plants and algae thrive in our lakes. When leaves fall off trees and decay, they release those nutrients back into the environment. Organic material such as leaves take a long time to decompose at the bottom of the lake where low oxygen levels slow down the decomposition. Several inches of accumulated decomposing leaves turn into "muck" on the lake bottom. **Putting leaves in the water is like fertilizing our lake for next year's algae growth.**

Please DO NOT:

- Blow or rake leaves directly into Lake Hopatcong, nearby drainage ditches, streams, streets or storm drains.
- Pile leaves close to the lake where wind will likely carry leaves into the water.

Instead consider the following environmentally friendly options:

- If you have lawn where the leaves fall, you can **leave the leaves** where they fall. Leaves provide winter cover and insulation for pollinators and other important invertebrates. If you can't leave your whole lawn covered, consider allowing your planting beds to remain covered over the winter months. For the remainder of your lawn you might consider **mulching the leaves in place** with a power lawn mower.
- **Compost your leaves.** This can be as simple as putting leaves into a pile. Create your compost pile away from the lake and where leaves won't blow into the lake over the winter. To speed the decomposition of the leaves into compost, you can use a compost bin or occasionally turn and water the area. This will eventually produce a beneficial soil additive that can be spread on lawn or garden areas.

Vegetative Waste (Leaves and Grass Only): Vegetative Waste may be in a trash can or container, or biodegradable paper bags (required by the Morris County Transfer Station). Paper bags may be purchased at Home Depot, Shop-Rite, etc. See Borough Newsletter/Calendar for beginning and end dates. **No Plastic Bags! CONTAINERS NO LARGER THAN 32 GALLONS.**

Please note that the schedule is subject to change. It is advisable that all waste is placed on the sidewalk by 5:00 a.m. on the day of pickup.

For more information: <https://mountarlingtonnj.org/departments/utilities/>