

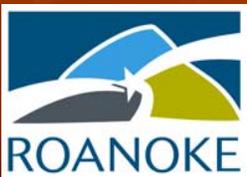
Mulch-Mowing

The Leaf Collection Alternative



Mulch Mowing – Why?

- Disposing of fallen tree leaves each autumn is problematic for professional turf managers and homeowners alike.
- Raking, blowing, and/or vacuuming tree leaves is labor intensive and therefore expensive.
- Each fall, there are reports of back injuries from raking and/or bagging leaves.
- In some states, lawn waste (including leaves) has been banned from landfills for more than 10 years.
- The easiest method of disposing leaves is to simply mulch them into the turf.



Mulch Mowing – What is it?

- Mulch-Mowers (like food processors for your lawn) use a modified blade and enclosed deck to slice grass clippings and dried leaves several times before depositing them back into the turfgrass, where they decompose over time.



- While a Mulch-Mower is best, using virtually any rotary mower will chop leaves enough so that they will work their way through the turfgrass canopy. Retrofitting your current rotary mower with a Mulching blade could cost as little as \$10.00

Mulch Mowing – Safety First

- First, take some simple safety precautions. Remove sticks and debris from the lawn before using your mower.
- Next, be sure you have safety glasses and ear protection – just as you should any time that you use outdoor power equipment.
- You may also want to wear a dust mask over your mouth and nose IF the leaves are very dry. Experience has found that leaves actually mulch better and produce less dust if mown when they are slightly moist.



Mulch Mowing – How it is done

- Weekly Mulch-Mowing of leaves is normally as quick & easy as regular grass mowing.



Most mower decks can be set high enough to accommodate up to 3-4 inches of leaf litter.



Mulch Mowing – How it is done

- Heavier leaf accumulations taking only a second or third mowing pass to make the leaves seemingly disappear as they filter into the turfgrass canopy.



Mulch Mowing – The Results

Typical results after three passes:



Mulch Mowing – Side by Side Results

- As those chopped up leaf bits decompose, they increase the soil's organic matter content thereby reducing both water & fertilizer requirements of the turfgrass – which helps Mother Nature and helps keep your lawn lush, green and healthy.



Mulch Mowing – The Results

A Purdue University research report entitled “Leaf Mulching Effects on Turf Performance” showed that up to 4000 lbs of maple leaves per acre could be mulched with no negative effects on turf quality, color, thatch accumulation, soil pH change, weed populations or disease. (A wooded lot will drop only 3000 lbs/A)

Mulch Mowing leaves is not, however, a substitute for routine fertilization practices.

www.agry.purdue.edu/turf/report/1999/page24.htm is the website where you can find the full report by Zak Reicher and Glenn Hardebeck

In 2006, Virginia Tech updated their Mulch-Mowing publication entitled “Leave” Them Alone: Lawn Leaf Management by Dr Mike Goatley, extension Turfgrass specialist.



Mulch Mowing the Environmental Alternative

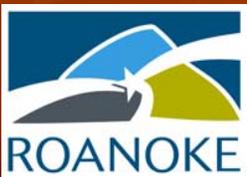
■ In addition to Mulch-Mowing being the quickest and easiest leaf disposal alternative, Citizens who choose this method are also helping the City of Roanoke address two quality of life issues as outlined in the Vision 2001-2020 Comprehensive Plan:

Fewer leaves in the street result in cleaner, safer, more aesthetically pleasing streets:

- Leaf piles may become fire hazards if a vehicle's catalytic converter comes in contact with dry leaves
- Leaf piles may become slippery when wet, especially for pedestrians forced to walk in the street as they avoid leaves piled on sidewalks
- Leaf piles may become dangerous unseen obstacles if City workers have to plow snow from an early winter storm

Fewer leaves in the street mean better environmental stewardship:

- Leaf piles may become pollutants when autumn rains wash leaves and/or their phosphorus leachate into the City's storm water system, potentially leading to the eutrophication of Roanoke's creeks, streams and rivers.
- Leaf piles may clog the City's storm drain system causing flooded streets and potentially flooded properties



Mulch Mowing – A last thought

- After using your mower as a leaf mulcher this fall, remember to sharpen the blades and change/clean the filters before storing it for the winter.



- The City would like to acknowledge Dr. Mike Goatley, extension Turfgrass specialist at Virginia Tech, for allowing use of information from his “Leave” Them Alone: Lawn Leaf Management publication available at <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-521/430-521.html>.