

Why Shouldn't I Blow My Leaves and Grass Clippings Into the Street?



The City of Monessen Department of Public Works would like to educate residents about the impacts of certain practices on the stormwater system and provide information about proper yard waste disposal practices. Grass clippings and leaves blown or swept into storm drains or into the street harms the storm system and impacts local waterways. Storm drains flow into pipes and into drainage ways and ultimately the river. When anything but rain and snow melt goes down the storm drain, it can become a drainage problem. Improper disposal of yard waste, including leaves and grass clippings, has the potential to impact water quality and cause drainage problems during a storm event.

Did you know?

- When yard waste is discarded or blown into a stormwater inlet or onto the street, it can cause flooding problems. Leaves and yard debris can block the natural flow of water in the storm drainage system, which can cause water to back up and flood within the drainage system or waterways.
- When yard waste is discarded within the stormwater drainage system, it will decompose. Decomposing yard waste can supercharge the waterways with nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, causing algae blooms resulting in low dissolved oxygen. Severely low dissolved oxygen levels in waterways can cause fish kills. According to the U.S. EPA, phosphorus is one of the most troublesome pollutants in stormwater runoff and it is considered the primary cause of water quality issues.

- When yard waste is discarded within the stormwater drainage system, it can bring harmful chemicals into the waterways, including fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. While these chemicals can be used to protect grass, they will harm aquatic life and cause additional adverse effects to water quality when released into streams.

Proper Management and Disposal

- It is the policy of the Department of Public Works to sweep the streets of harmful substances that may contaminate the environment and to remove potential debris that may clog our storm drains. The City's street sweeper can barely keep up with the leaves already on the ground; please don't add to the burden by sweeping or blowing leaves or grass clippings into your streets.
- Grass clippings can be left on the ground to improve the health of the lawn itself. There is no excuse for sweeping grass and/or leaves into the storm drains or waterways.
- Leaves can be a valuable part of any compost pile. They can be mixed with grass clippings and food scraps to help create a nutrient-rich soil for gardens or landscapes.
- Leaves can also be mulched. Mowing over leaves with a mower shreds them into smaller pieces which can be left to decompose and act as a natural fertilizer. Shredded leaves can also be placed around plants to aid in weed suppression and help retain soil moisture.
- Grass clippings and leaves may also be placed in biodegradable bags and left on the curb with your local trash pickup. Please contact ProWaste, LLC, who is the current Monessen garbage pickup provider regarding their yard waste policy prior to placing bags on the curb. ProWaste can be contacted at (724)-433-3440.

We appreciate your cooperation in maintaining the quality of our state's water by practicing the yard waste disposal methods discussed above. If you have any questions, or require additional information, please contact the City Offices (724)-684-9000.