

## Leaf-free Streets for Clean Waters

### Fall Leaf Campaign

The Rock Lake Improvement Association (RLIA) is working again this year with the City of Lake Mills and Madison Area Municipal Stormwater Partnership to promote putting leaves in the proper location for pick up. Both the RLIA and City of Lake Mills are actively involved in many efforts to improve the quality of stormwater runoff including leaf collection and storm drain marking, however we don't have the staff or equipment to remove leaves from streets prior to every rain event.

**Leaves must be raked to the edge of the street terrace only and not into the curb. Raking leaves into the curb allows them to enter the storm sewer system and ultimately end up in Rock Lake causing toxic algae blooms, low oxygen levels and murky waters.**

**Here are some things you can do to help.** Take simple steps to place leafs on the terrace when raking for yard cleanup and especially before rain storms this fall to help keep Rock Lake clean and safe.

1. **Remove leaves from street** within 5 feet of the curb and any storm drains in front of your property



**before it rains.**

2. **Pile** collected leaves neatly **onto the terrace** to keep them from falling into the street. Covering the piles with a tarp is a good idea to prevent them from blowing around. Check with The City of Lake Mills for pick up dates and other requirements so that your leaves are on the terrace for as short a time as possible. Type this link in your browser for more information: [www.ci.lake-mills.wi.us/index.asp?SEC=F8723CF1-6B52-44BD-999D-E515871355AF&Type=B\\_BASIC](http://www.ci.lake-mills.wi.us/index.asp?SEC=F8723CF1-6B52-44BD-999D-E515871355AF&Type=B_BASIC)
3. **Mulch** leaves directly on the lawn. If your lawn mower has a bagger, empty the chopped up leaves on gardens, flowerbeds or around trees and shrubs.

4. **Compost** Mix leaves with other compostable items and spread it on gardens next spring. It saves money and water, helps your gardens, and benefits the environment. For tips on how to start composting type this link in your browser: [www.ripple-effects.com/yardAndGarden#compost](http://www.ripple-effects.com/yardAndGarden#compost).
5. **Take** a little extra care and blow the cut grass onto the lawn not into the street.
6. **Use** the City of Lake Mills yard waste site, if you don't have options to compost. Type this link in your browser for more information: [www.ci.lake-mills.wi.us/index.asp?SEC=72E36344-1B8F-4E52-BC10-6F5DC62BE33E&Type=B\\_BASIC](http://www.ci.lake-mills.wi.us/index.asp?SEC=72E36344-1B8F-4E52-BC10-6F5DC62BE33E&Type=B_BASIC)

For more information on “**Leaf-free Streets for Clean Waters**” visit:  
[www.rocklake.org](http://www.rocklake.org) and [www.ripple-effects.com/Leaf-Management](http://www.ripple-effects.com/Leaf-Management)

**This is what happens when leaves are placed in the street or gutters!**

The green leaves that provide us much needed shade in the summer can contribute to the “greening” of our lakes and rivers as they collect in the streets each fall. Decaying leaves are a great natural fertilizer for gardens and lawns, but they also release unwanted nutrients into our local waters. More than 50% of the annual amount of phosphorus in urban stormwater can come from leaves in the



street! When it rains, stormwater flows through leaf piles in streets creating a “leaf tea” that is rich in dissolved phosphorus. The phosphorus present in this “leaf tea” is not removed by stormwater drains and is carried through storm sewers to our beautiful Rock Lake and the Crawfish River. Too much phosphorus can lead to toxic algae blooms, low oxygen levels and murky waters, none of which are good for the fish and other creatures living in or on the water or those of us who use it for recreation. Much in the same way as leaves, grass clippings can get washed down the

drain straight into Rock Lake. We have all seen when a lawnmower blows the cut grass into the street. Another way of helping minimize organic materials getting into Rock Lake is to manage where the grass clippings are blown when cutting the lawn.

**We can all make a difference by doing simple practices all year.**