



What to do with all those leaves !

Description

A wire container for leaves collected from fall and spring clean ups and planting bed weeding.

Purpose

To make leaf compost. (called leaf mold) To observe decomposition; find isopods; worms & insects, to measure, collect data and observe changes over time. To use for improving soil & holding moisture in planting beds and as mulch in woodland to hold down weeds.

Introduction to Composting

Rake leaves and place inside wire

cage (measure height, moisture, record color & condition of leaves. Add weeds (leaves **only**) from planting beds and pathways (**no** stems, woody sticks, paper or other trash) Do not add weeds that have formed seeds - they may promote more weeds in planting beds and woodland in the future.

Maintaining the Leaf Cage

Remove all trash. Add leaves from fall & spring clean ups. Add leaves throughout growing season. If there are extra schoolyard leaves to manage in the fall use paper leaf bags and work with City's Boston Shines annual clean up.

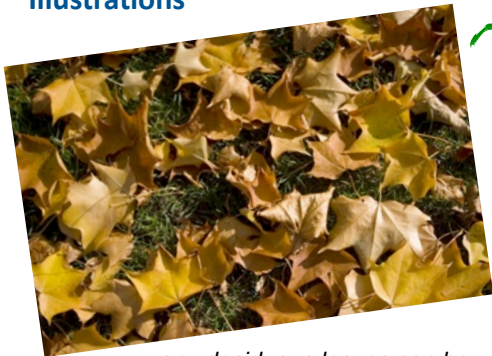
Using the Leaf Mold

Every spring after a year of active composting remove the decomposed leaves (a brown crumbling soil-like mass). There may be remaining leaf material after one year, as it takes 2 years for leaves to break down beyond recognition. They will continue to break down as mulch. Composted leaves are acidic and as they continue to break down use nitrogen - if added to planting beds fertilizer is needed to grow tomatoes and other vegetables.

How To web links...

[Organic Gardening Magazine](#)
[Fine Gardening website](#)

Illustrations



any deciduous leaves can be used, a variety is even better (sweet gum leaves shown)



rake leaves and fill the leaf cage

(note measuring stick to record changing height of leaves during the process)



one year later...

leaf mold ready to spread on garden beds (note: in dry conditions it may take more than one year to create leaf mold that is as dark and rich as shown)



leaf mold keeps decomposing through the winter and into spring, turn & stir the leaf mixture to help full breakdown

