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Recycle Garden Waste Without Composting

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GARDEN NOTES

RECYCLE GARDEN WASTE WITHOUT COMPOSTING

By Dennis Hinkamp

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Though composting is now the coolest thing since plastic pink flamingos in the yard, a most garden waste is useful without composting it. Think of it as pre-composting.

According to Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist, using garden waste can reduce the flow of green material sent to the landfills, improve the soil and increase the health of most plants. He urges gardener try these idea before sending yard waste to the dump or the compost bin.

1. Grasscycle. The easiest way to reduce your amount of yard waste is to leave is to leave the grass clippings on the grass and not bag them. It is a great way to return nutrients and organic material to the soil. It reduces the water requirements of the lawn and cuts mowing time significantly. Grasscycling does not increase the thatch layer, and can be very beneficial to the soil.

2. Use grass clippings as a mulch. Save grass clippings for your vegetable or flower garden. Later the clippings can be worked into the soil, which improves tilth and workability. However, they should be dried before being used as a mulch. Do not pile wet, fresh clippings more than an inch deep at a time or they will turn into a stinky, sticky, mess.

3. Shred leaves. Shredded leaves in the fall can be used as a mulch around the trees, shrubs and perennials. By spring, the leaves decompose and add precious organic matter to the soil. Leaves can be shredded by running over them with a lawn mower. This is usually easier that raking them up, even though it makes a lousy leaf pile for jumping.

4. Work leaves into growing areas. If the leaves are shredded first they are easier to rototill, but shredding is not required. Adding some nitrogen into the area will speed decomposition.

5. Use evergreen needles for mulch or a soil amendment. They will acidify Utah's alkali soils while increasing the organic content. Conifer needles break down slowly, but still improve the soil over the long haul.

6. Shred all dead annuals. After they are shredded, they can be worked into the garden or flower beds. The lawn mower works well for this too. Be careful of annuals that reseed

themselves, though. They can become weeds in a garden. These include marigolds, snapdragons, cosmos, calendula, and alyssum.

7. As a last resort, compost. The most productive method, is to build a compost pile and compost all garden, yard, and kitchen waste. Composting is a lot easier than most people believe, and, if done correctly, has no unpleasant odor. Compost is the best soil amendment, improving the tilth, workability, drainage, and nutrient holding capacity.

For more information, contact your local **USU County Extension office.**

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