

Turning over a new leaf: Village to modernize fall leaf collection

Beginning this fall, the Village is modernizing its Fall Leaf Collection Program to improve safety, help the environment and provide residents with more choices for how to handle leaves.

The modernization of the Fall Leaf Collection Program - the first since 1994 - will address resident concern over the potential safety hazards created by leaf piles, streamline the leaf collection pickup process and reduce confusion over parking restrictions. The changes come after the Village conducted case studies of 150 Illinois municipalities to identify best practices for leaf collection.

Oak Park's annual fall leaf collection period typically runs from late October - early December. Previously the Village used a pile model in which large piles of loose leaves were consolidated at street corners for collection.

This year, residents will no longer sweep leaves to the curb. Instead, they are able to choose from a variety of leaf collection options that will improve safety, sustainability, and efficiency. These options include:

- Bagging fallen leaves in yard waste bags and/or rigid containers and placing them in the parkway by the curb;
- Composting them via the Village's CompostAble program;
- Leaving the leaves on the lawn to decompose naturally

Additional details and answers to frequently asked questions can be found on the Village website at www.oak-park.us/leafcollection.

In addition to offering choice for residents, the changes are anticipated to provide benefits such as increased tree and soil health through mulching, enhanced public safety by removing leaf piles to improve visibility on streets and in the public way, and potential reduction in costs for collection. The changes will also resolve inconvenient parking disruption caused by overnight leaf-pushing and daytime collection of piles that previously created disproportionate reduction of parking in affected areas.

Under the new system, the Village's residential waste hauler Lakeshore Recycling Systems (LRS) will have dedicated compost trucks and leaf crews that will collect bags and empty rigid landscape containers from the parkway according to the route and schedule set by Public Works staff. A Village-wide make-up day is included in the weekly Fall Leaf Collection schedule to supplement areas with higher leaf volumes or to catch-up after inclement weather events.

As part of the transition, the Village is exploring potential financial assistance for residents, as well as expanding its Sidewalk Shoveling Program - typically used to assist income-eligible residents that physically cannot shovel snow nor afford to hire a shoveling service - to expand that program for leaf services.

This fall the Village will broadly communicate additional details about the changes via its website, social media channels, e-newsletter, the OP/FYI newsletter, local media outlets and more. Staff will also attend community events throughout the coming months to discuss the changes with residents and answer questions in-person.

For questions about the new Fall Leaf Collection program, please call 708.358.5700 or email publicworks@oak-park.us.

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