

Date: October 18, 2005
Release: Home Gardening
Writer: Tony Melton, County Agent
Florence County

If You Hate Raking Leaves, then:

I love the color of fall, but raking leaves seems to be an endless job. Once you get them raked-up, more falls. The smart thing would be to wait until all the leaves have fallen and get them up in one raking, but that would give your neighbors more to talk about. I figure if I have got to rake them up anyway, I might as well get some benefits for my effort. So instead of filling the garbage dump with leaves, use them to make your lawn and garden the best in the neighborhood and give your neighbors something good to talk about.

Actually leaves and all kinds of yard waste can be used to create a valuable product called compost. Composting is a practical and convenient way to handle yard trimmings. It is easier and cheaper than bagging or removing them from your property. The compost created from trimmings enriches your soil and plants. If you have a garden, a lawn, trees, shrubs or even houseplants, you have a use for compost. In fact, anything that once lived can be reincarnated through compost to give you beautiful plants in your landscape.

Compost improves your soil. When added to soil, compost breaks up heavy clay soils, helps sandy soils retain water and nutrients, and releases essential nutrients. Compost also contains beneficial microscopic organisms that build up the soil and make nutrients available to plants. Improving your soil is the first step towards growing healthy plants.

Composting is easy. Just pile-up anything that once lived, add a small amount of water, wait for it to compost and turn the pile a few times. However, we do not recommend using meat, bones and oils. The smaller the materials are chopped and the more green (nitrogen containing) materials the faster the composting.

To learn the specifics on composting properly we have a free publication at our office in the back of the Social Services Building on the corner of Third Loop and Irby. You may also visit our Home & Garden Information Center through our web site at www.clemson.edu/florence. I may be contacted through our web site, amelton@clemson.edu or 661-4800.

The Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, disability, political belief, sexual orientation, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer.