

In the Mainstream

Newsletter for Members of the Norwalk River Watershed Association [NRWA]
New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Wilton, CT, and Lewisboro, NY

www.norwalkriver.org

Fall/Winter 2009/2010

INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEANUP SEPTEMBER 19, 2009

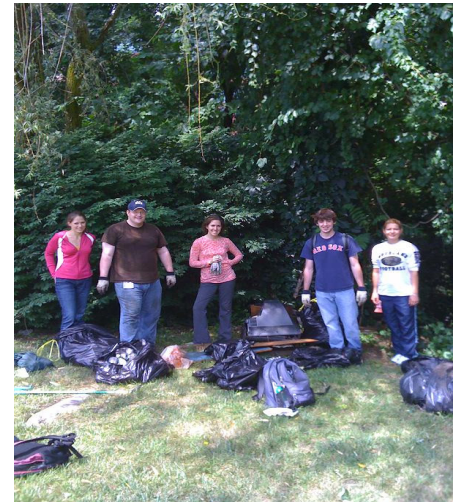
The Ocean Conservancy's 24th Annual International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) will take place on Saturday, September 19, 2009. Last year nearly 400,000 volunteers collected more than 6.8 million pounds of trash in 100 countries and 42 US states during International Coastal Cleanup — the world's largest volunteer effort of its kind. In Connecticut alone, 1708 volunteers removed nearly 14,000 pounds of trash from over 60 miles of Connecticut shoreline in 2008. For this year's ICC, Connecticut boasts over 20 different clean up sites including the Norwalk River. The NRWA and the Norwalk River Rowing Association (NRRRA) have teamed up this year to host a joint effort to pick up trash along the banks of the Norwalk River and from the water by kayak or boat beginning at NRRRA headquarters, 1 Moody's Lane in Norwalk, from 9am to 12pm on September 19th. Save the Sound, a program of the Connecticut Fund for the Environment, is Connecticut's state-wide coordinator for this international volunteer effort. More information including other cleanup sites in Connecticut is available at www.savethesound.org or www.coastalcleanup.org.

Each year, the Ocean Conservancy provides a compelling global snapshot of marine debris collected on one day at thousands of sites all over the world in its International Coastal Cleanup Data Report. The report reveals the findings of the 2008 Cleanup in its *Marine Debris Index*, the world's only country-by-country, state-by-state breakdown of trash in our oceans, lakes, rivers, and streams. This data, compiled each year at the Cleanup, has informed major legislation, inspired improvements in packaging and other technologies, and expanded recycling efforts in communities. Along with the report's recommendations, the *Marine Debris Index* provides a roadmap for eliminating marine debris altogether by reducing it at the source, changing behaviors that cause it, and supporting better policy. During the 2008 Cleanup, volunteers collected 11,077 diapers in the Philippines, 19,504 fishing nets in the United Kingdom, and 1,362,741 cigarette butts in the US. Of the 43 items tracked during the cleanup, the top three were cigarette butts, plastic bags and food wrappers/containers. That's the kind of information that helps planners at the local, regional, national, and international levels tackle marine debris effectively. So join the forces assembling on September 19.

VOLUNTEER ACTION: HEWITT EMPLOYEES CLEAN UP THE NORWALK RIVER

The hot muggy weather on July 22nd never phased a group of corporate volunteers working a full-day clean-up shift along the Norwalk River near Merritt Seven and on Schenk's Island in Wilton Center. Six energetic, generous employees of Hewitt Associates, a human resources outsourcing and consulting company with offices on Glover Avenue near the Merritt 7 complex in Norwalk, worked from 8:30am to 4:30 pm. The group collected several garbage bags of recyclable cans and bottles, several more bags of garbage, and lugged tires, plywood, furniture and other large debris up the banks and off to the dump.

Volunteer Rachel Ginsburg contacted the NRWA to offer the group's time as way for them to take part in a Hewitt program that allows employees to take a day off of work for local community service activities.



Sara Lapham, Jason Ard, Rachel Ginsburg, Dave Fairburn, and Shelly Jones of Hewitt Associates.

"We had a blast and I think we accomplished a lot for one day," says volunteer Erin Hershner of the group's efforts. Ginsburg and Hershner were joined by associates Sara Lapham, Jason Ard, Dave Fairburn, and Shelly Jones. NRWA thanks Hewitt Associates and the six volunteers for their generous donation of time, energy and work to help clean up the river.

Go paperless!

Help conserve paper, fuel and overhead costs.

Get the NRWA Newsletter, *In the Mainstream*, online instead of in the mail by indicating your preference on the enclosed membership form, dropping us an e-mail at info@norwalkriver.org, or sending your donation via *PayPal* on our website at www.norwalkriver.org.



NRWA NEWS

Watershed Trails On-line!!! The Norwalk River Watershed Interactive Map is now available on our website to view the extensive trail system which meanders all over the Norwalk River Valley as well as some trails in neighboring Southwestern Connecticut towns. NRWA has been busy adding our trail blaze (a white square with a vertical blue line through the center) to segments of the system over recent years and working with Scott Sharlow - Technology & GIS Director for the Town of Newtown - to digitize the trail maps and put them into an interactive web-based format. We are currently working on producing paper trail maps which will soon be available through our website. We're still working out the kinks, so please let us know if any trails you know of in the watershed are missing from our map or have since been relocated. Visit www.norwalkriver.org to check it out and go for a hike!

River Study. NRWA has taken over responsibility for overseeing the River Study Program from the 6-town River Board which has disbanded. Currently, only the towns of Ridgefield and Wilton participate in this hands-on educational program designed to introduce students to the Norwalk River as well as the plant and animal life on its banks. The sessions include classroom lessons as well as activities along the banks of the river. The programs are organized within the schools by the PTSA and staffed with volunteer parents. Please contact us to start River Study in your school!

Responsible Business Network (RBN). NRWA encourages additional businesses, particularly those located along Rt. 7 on the Norwalk River, to take the pledge for responsible environmental business practices and to help NRWA continue its mission of providing environmental education through free programs and publications. Benefits include being listed in our newsletter and on our website as a responsible business as well as receiving a certificate of membership for showcasing your pledge to your customers. To become a member, or to see businesses which have already joined the Network and taken the environmental pledge, visit our website at www.norwalkriver.org.

Osprey Update

By David W. Park

Ospreys (fish hawk) fly to South America each winter and return in late March to nest. So the question is asked from time to time, "How many nesting osprey are in the area?" The answer has always been a guess. I knew where most were located, so I set out to make an accurate count which came out to nine in Norwalk and a total of 13 in Norwalk, Westport and Darien. Ten years ago, Norwalk had only one nest and Westport had one nest at Sherwood Mill Pond. Since then, new nests have appeared each year as the Osprey have struggled to recover from declines in population caused by the use of the pesticide DDT, banned in the early 1970s. I plan to update this count in May of each year to see if the upward trend continues.

Ospreys are known to be adaptive and picky in choosing locations to nest.

The first Norwalk nest was built on live power lines at the Manresa Island electric generating plant. Plant officials relocated the nest to a new pole which the Osprey adopted. This nest has a webcam in place and can be seen live on the Maritime Aquarium website.

Manresa Island is now home to four nests. In recent years, a nest was built on top of baseball field lights at Calf Pasture Beach. When new lights were erected, Norwalk officials installed a new platform on top of the pole which the osprey adopted. Many other platforms erected by well-meaning people have been ignored by the birds, however.



Ospreys on their nest.

2009 ANNUAL MEETING

The short business part of the meeting featured an annual election to the Board of Directors. Three returning Board Members were elected to two-year terms: Elizabeth Craig of Wilton, David Havens of New Canaan, and NRWA Treasurer Mark Riser of Ridgefield. One new Board Member, Louise Washer of Norwalk, was elected to a two-year term.

Louise Washer, a former magazine editor and freelance writer, holds a BA from Smith College, has children in the Wilton school system and is a former parent organizer for the River Study program at Cider Mill School in Wilton. Louise was further elected to position of secretary for NRWA.

President Sara N. da Silva presented NRWA co-founder Lillian Willis with a plaque of appreciation for her more than 13 years of dedicated service to the organization. Ms. Willis stepped down as President of NRWA on January 1, 2009 and assumed the position of Vice President until May 6th when she resigned from the Board. Ms. Willis relocated to Vermont, but will serve in an advisory capacity to NRWA.

President Sara N. da Silva announced that the organization has taken over the River Study program from the former 6-town River Board and then began the slide show presentation of the evening. Ms. da Silva presented green tips for home owners including the use of rain barrels, invasive plant control and natural pest control, followed by a slide show yearbook of the organization's more than 30 events over the past year.

David Havens, Science Teacher and Environmental Education Coordinator at St. Luke's School in New Canaan, then gave a talk on hands on projects of his students during the past year. These projects included water quality research on the Silvermine River and management of mile-a-minute, an invasive plant, at Gimbell's Park in Greenwich.

Dick Harris, Director of Harbor Watch/River Watch out of Earthplace in Westport, then gave his annual report on the state of the Norwalk River system. His results showed bacteria and phosphorus continuing to be a major problem in the River. There are significant reductions in bacteria and phosphorus levels from the Ridgefield and Georgetown sewage treatment plants when they operate their pollutant-removal system as required during summer months, but astoundingly high levels of both pollutants when those systems are allowed to be turned off over the winter. Mr. Harris explained the Rt. 7 plant is up for permit renewal from the State in September and that we need to demand changes in operation for the renewed permit. At minimum, year-round phosphorous removal and ultra-violet lights for bacteria reduction should be required. There was also discussion pertaining to the CT's triennial review of water quality standards and Mr. Harris commented that current phosphorus standards are far from adequate and that standards for temperature and other pollutants need to be reassessed.

In the Mainstream © 2009

Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.

The mission of the Norwalk River Watershed Association is to improve the water quality and the quality of life in the region by fostering education, cooperation, and action on the part of individuals, businesses, community groups, and governmental agencies in the seven Norwalk River Watershed Towns.

Officers of NRWA Board of Directors

Sara da Silva, President (Norwalk)
Mark Riser, Treasurer (Ridgefield)
Louise Washer, Secretary (Norwalk)

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

NRWA programs highlight the importance and features of the river and its watershed and ways people collectively and individually can improve the region.

Programs are free, unless specified, but space may be limited, and reservations are suggested. Call the leader listed or **NRWA toll free at 877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463)** for more information, directions, and reservations. Hikers should always wear hiking shoes and bring water.

INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMS

September 9, Wednesday, 9:30 AM. Town of Westport organizes 2nd Mile-a-minute removal day. The CT Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) is seeking volunteers to help remove mile-a-minute vine, an invasive plant. Meet at 9:30 am at 980 Post Road East in the Bank of America parking lot. Parking also available at 1000 Post Road East (Arby's). Participants will remove and bag mile-a-minute vine. This plant has small but sharp spines - bring gloves! For more information, contact: Alicia Mozian, Westport Conservation Director, at 203-341-1170.

September 11, 12 & 13th, Friday-Sunday. Norwalk Oyster Festival. At Norwalk's Veteran's Park. Visit www.seaport.org for more info.

September 12, Saturday, 10:30 AM – 3 PM. Birds of Prey Art Exhibit & Live Falconry Demonstration at Highstead in Redding. You are invited to an Artist's Discussion on the exhibition, Birds of Prey of the Eastern U.S. Afterwards, Chris Davis, Master Falconer, will enlighten us on the natural history of raptors and their conservation and offer a live demonstration of these birds in action. For more info, call Highstead at 203-938-8809, or visit www.highstead.net for specific times for the day's events.

September 15, Tuesday, 9:15 AM - 11 AM. River Study - Adult Training. Veteran's Park School in Ridgefield. Contact Donna Roscoe at donna@roscoe.cc.



Volunteers at last year's Annual Aldrich Park Invasive Work Day.

September 19, Saturday, 9 AM - 12 PM. International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) – Norwalk River. Be a part of the ICC and join the Norwalk River Rowing Assoc. (NRRA) & NRWA for a shoreline cleanup. Whether by boat or by land, help us pick up trash and clean up the Norwalk River. Wear work gloves and appropriate footwear. Meet at NRRA boat house at 1 Moody's Lane, Norwalk. Contact Louise Washer at 1-203-840-9008 to sign up.

September 20, Sunday, 10 AM – 4 PM. Taste! Organic Connecticut. Celebrate the harvest at this 9th annual event located at Manchester Community College; sponsored by CT NOFA. CT's only LOCAL & ORGANIC festival offering a farmer's market, food, live music, sustainable vendors, artisans, free workshops and free kids activities! Workshops include Healthy Cooking Demonstrations, Community Gardening, Composting, Organic Beer Making and more! Adults \$10, Free for kids under 12 and seniors over 80. Discounts available with pre-registration and for members. For details, visit ctnofa.org

September 19 & 20, Saturday-Sunday, 11 AM – 5 PM. Audubon Greenwich's Hawk Watch Weekend & Green Festival. Come celebrate the annual hawk migration over Audubon Greenwich's "Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch" – an official raptor counting site. Rain or shine, there will also be several eco-friendly vendors on-site, environmental exhibits (including NRWA!) and activities for all ages.

http://greenwich.audubon.org/Programs_SpecialEvents.html

October 24, Saturday, 1-2:30 PM. Tour of Georgetown's Historic Main Street. Local historian, Brent Colley will lead a Tour of Georgetown (an area that encompasses parts of Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, and Wilton) that will focus on the town's historic Main Street. Starting at the Georgetown Bible Church, Colley will lead tour participants up Portland Avenue, over Brookside Road, across Route 107, and down Main Street. Along the way, famous legends, people, businesses, and events from Georgetown's past will come to life. Learn about the old stagecoach route, Chamber's coal mine, Rumsey's well, Uncle Will's blacksmith shop, Gilbert and Bennett, the peanut lady, the flood of '55, and more! Meet at the Georgetown Bible Church parking lot on Route 107 just east of the intersection of routes 107 and 57, and east of Route 7. Wear walking shoes. For information contact Brent Colley at 860-364-7475. No reservations are required, this is a free program.

October 25, Sunday 1-4 PM. Best Views Hike: Norwalk Meets Saugatuck. Dramatic Topstone Park is the divide between the Norwalk and Saugatuck watersheds and offers amazing views over both watersheds! The scenery at fall leaf time should be more than usually fantastic! The open spaces also link two different long trail systems and feature four Scout award projects, an old stone causeway, woodlands, floodplain, and the Ridgefield River Study site on the way from the Norwalk to Saugatuck

Watershed and back. Saugatuck hikers may meet us at the overlooks. Wear hiking shoes for this fairly strenuous hike, bring water. Meet on the east side of Route 7 just north of the traffic light at the intersection of Route 7 and Topstone Road in Ridgefield. Led by NRWA Board Member Mark Riser. For reservations and directions, call Mark Riser (203-470-6453).

November 1, Sunday, Noon-3 PM. Norwalk River Valley Hike. This watershed hike features different habitats and parcels owned by different Town, State, Federal, and private agencies in Ridgefield and Wilton which cooperated to create one long section of the Norwalk River Valley Trail System. Participants will get to know the sometimes tricky trail entrances, as well as special features of the land and some interesting bridges and raised walkways for easier access and better viewing. Wear waterproof hiking shoes, bring water and a snack lunch to eat at the Woodcock Nature Center swamp overlook. Meet at the gravel parking area .1 of a mile south of Woodchuck Lane on the east side of Route 33 in Ridgefield. Reservations are a must because people will be carpoled back from the end of the hike at Weir Farm to the parking area on Route 33. Contact Kitsey Snow at kitsnow@aol.com or call NRWA at 1-877-NRWA-INFO to register, for information, or for further directions.

November 8, Sunday, 1-3 PM. Meadow in the Works. Wilton Land Conservation Trust and Town officials are collaborating with other volunteer groups to create exemplary meadow and riparian habitats at Schenck's Island, across from Wilton Town Center. Teresa Mucci will give us a progress report on this work-in-progress meadow, and then show us how we can continue to help restore it. Wear outdoor work shoes, clothes, gloves, and bring water. Call NRWA at 1-877-NRWA-INFO to sign up.

November 14, Saturday, 9:30 AM-12:30 PM. Annual Aldrich Park Invasive Workday. Wear work shoes, clothes, gloves, and bring water for this continued attempt to control Japanese barberry at an important Ridgefield Open space with town

trails that are also part of a 5-mile section of the Norwalk River Valley trail system. There are jobs for a variety of age levels. Adults and students ages 9 and up are encouraged to bring shovels. Weed wrenches welcome! Meet at the Aldrich parking area on the north side of New Road, just one mile west of Route 7 in Ridgefield. Call NRWA to register and for directions.



Snowshoeing at Lake Windwing

February (TBD), Sunday, 1-3 PM. Snowshoe Hike at Lake Windwing. Now that the Superbowl is over, come outside and join us for a snowshoe clinic or just a snowshoe hike on the trails around beautiful Lake Windwing in Ridgefield. Co-sponsored by Ridgefield's Discovery Center, Ridgefield Parks & Rec Dept. and NRWA. Limited snowshoes will be available on a first-come first-serve basis for the clinic. This program is weather permitting and for ages 8 and up. Parking is available near the ball fields off South Shore Drive, Ridgefield, CT. To register, call 203-438-1063 or email info@ridgefelddiscovery.org. \$5 fee for non-Discovery Center members.

March 6, Saturday, 1 - 3 PM. Spring Amphibian Walk. March is a magical time to search for frogs and salamanders! Dave Havens of NRWA will give a short introduction on amphibians and how to spot them. Then we'll go on a woodland walk to visit vernal ponds coming to life with salamanders, newts, frogs and toads. Search for eggs, tadpoles, learn about their seasonal habitats, life history, and some of the many species which live in our area. Meet at St. Luke's School in New Canaan at the first

parking lot on the right, behind the ball field. Bring tall waterproof boots. Call NRWA for reservations.



Upcoming Household Hazardous Waste Collection Days:

September 12th - Norwalk
Andrews Field, County Street (8am-2pm)

October 3rd - Westport
Yard Waste Site, 180 Bayberry Lane (9am-2pm)

October 17th - New Canaan
Wastewater Treatment Plant, 394 Main Street (8am- 2pm)

October 17th & 24th - Lewisboro, NY
Former Recycling Center behind Town House at 11 Main St. Call Town Clerk at 763-3511 for more info. (9am-2pm)

October 31st - Wilton
Driscoll School, 214 Wolfpit Rd. (9-3pm)

Reduce your use of plastic bags!
This is incredibly important to our wild birds, fish, and environment. Start using reusable cloth bags to pack your groceries. It's not enough to just recycle the plastic bags.

2010 PHOTO EXHIBIT

Calling all photographers! NRWA will once again sponsor its traveling photo exhibit throughout the watershed towns. The opening reception will be held in February 2010. We will start posting information for this event in December. Stay tuned to our website, www.norwalkriver.org, for further details and to download a Photo Exhibit Form.



Stalled by the Spill" by Margaret Harris



KAYAK JAMBOREE 2009
AN EVENT BY KAYAKERS, FOR KAYAKERS,
ABOUT KAYAKERS – NORWALK ISLANDS

On August 7 – 9th, more than 50 kayakers attended the Norwalk Islands Kayaker Jamboree hosted by the Stamford Kayak Group. Kayakers paddled out to **Shea Island** from Norwalk's Calf Pasture Beach beginning on Friday night and throughout the weekend. On Saturday, there was an open house at the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 72 at Calf Pasture Beach, followed by demonstrations and speakers at the island on Saturday afternoon. Participants could opt to camp overnight Friday and Saturday, or paddle out daily to take part in activities, which concluded with an island cleanup on Sunday.

Demonstrations included rescue techniques and instructors from Downunder Kayaking in Rowayton offering tips on improving paddle skills. Sara da Silva, President of NRWA, then gave an ecology talk about the Long Island Sound's wildlife, water quality, and contributing watershed, which includes the Norwalk River.

Boaters from the Halloween Yacht Club in Stamford picked up the bagged trash from Sunday's cleanup. "It was a way for kayakers to learn from one another, socialize and give back to the community," said organizer Peter Cloudas, who founded the Stamford Kayaking Group on Meetup.com in 2007.

The Stamford Kayak Group is a local group of paddling enthusiasts looking to meet up with others who share the same interest. The group includes 420 members and has held over 170 meet-ups since its inception two years ago. This group is for people of all skill levels and includes all kayak types (recreational, touring, whitewater, surfing, etc.). They also welcome canoe enthusiasts and river rafters. They meet regularly for weekly sea-kayaking in the Stamford, Greenwich, Rowayton area, but also plan other meet-ups both on the sound and inland. For more information about the group and meet-ups planned for this Fall, visit <http://www.meetup.com/StamfordKayakGroup> and click on the message board. For a map of Norwalk waters and the islands, visit www.swrpa.org and click on publications, then Norwalk Islands canoe/kayak guide.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

- I support the improvement of the Norwalk River, its tributaries and its watershed. I would like to learn more about the needs of the region and ways we can all help.
 - I would also like information about opportunities to **volunteer**.
 - Enclosed is my tax-deductible, annual membership contribution.
- I would prefer to receive the semi-annual newsletter, *In the Mainstream*, via:
- The name and address written below, or
 - The email address listed below.

Riparian Society
 Steward \$1000 and up
 Protector \$750-\$999

Benefactor \$500-\$749
 Patron \$250-\$499
 Contributor \$100-\$249

Basic Membership
 Supporter \$50-\$99
 Donor \$25-\$49



Oyster Shell Park by Sara da Silva

**Please make check payable to: NRWA, Inc., and mail to the
 Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc., P.O. Box 197, Georgetown, CT 06829**

Name _____ Tel. _____ Email _____

Address _____
 Street Town State Zip

HIGH WATER MARKS: PHIL BRONSON

Phil Bronson and his sugar shack on Simpaug Turnpike in Redding are a very familiar site to many members of the NRWA community. Phil has been making maple syrup for more than 35 years, and giving NRWA as well as Ridgefield's Discovery Center members a special presentation every March for roughly the past 10 years. Just when the days start to warm up after a long winter, the sap starts running in maple trees across New England. Phil has been there to tap into that sap so that the rest of us can indulge in the sweet, viscous treat that brings back memories of childhood... maple syrup.



Phil Bronson in his sugar shack.

Although he used to help out making maple syrup when he was a boy, Phil started his own production process 35 years ago using a home-made evaporator to boil down the sweet liquid. About 25 years ago, he built his maple sugar shed to house the equipment and his jars of high quality Connecticut syrup. Around 15 years ago, Phil bought his first stainless steel commercial evaporator from the Leader Company of Vermont, enabling him to run a safer, cleaner operation that increased his efficiency of production. The resultant syrup has been selling like 'hot cakes' at the Bethel Farmer's Market and through word of mouth. His production varies from year to year, depending on the season and weather. He produced 50 gallons of syrup in 2008, versus 30 gallons this past year, both of which he considers good years.



Phil has not been working the maple trees and sugar shack alone. He's had a lot of help from his daughter and two sons over the years, with his daughter even using her dad's product as the basis for a marketing class project in college. Although none of his children live close enough to help out like they used to, Phil's friend, Len Dryer, was helping him out for more than 15 years. Len would drive the tractor while Phil would go along side tending to the tapped trees. Unfortunately, Len passed away about a year ago and Phil has had a hard time tending to all of the trees himself. Sadly, Phil has decided it's time to retire from maple sugaring and for the first time in more than three decades, will not be firing up the evaporator this coming March.

NRWA personally thanks Phil Bronson for sharing his passion for syrup and welcoming us into the warm sugar shack each March. His has consistently been our most popular event each year, drawing as many as 125 people before realizing we needed to limit attendance at each event. Phil, we will greatly miss seeing you at the end of each winter and wish you all the best.

Interested in Volunteering?

River Rangers, River Study Adult Training Coordinator, Hike Leaders, Kayak/Canoe Leaders, Trail Workers, Board Members, Grant Writers, Environmental or Website Writers, Graphic Designers, Gardeners, Scientists...these are just some of the volunteer positions we would like to fill. The more help we have, the more we can do. You can make the difference! Let us know your interests, expertise, and where you would like to help. Contact info@norwalkriver.org.



NORWALK RIVER WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION, INC.

www.norwalkriver.org

P. O. BOX 197
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877-NRWA-INFO
(877-679-2463) Toll Free

Change Service Requested

Fall is Leaf Time! Compost your leaves, mow them into your lawn as fertilizer, or bag them for curbside pickup. Download our "Four-Season Tip Sheet" for more year-round landscaping tips.

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