

Don't Dump Leaves in Lake Gaston

Residents and landscape contractors are reminded not to dispose of leaves, lawn clippings and other organic material in Lake Gaston.

As property owners around Lake Gaston begin the fall ritual of raking and blowing leaves up on their property, they should remember that disposing of the waste material into Lake Gaston is the wrong thing to do. Whether you do the work yourself, or hire a contractor to do the work for you, please don't dump the leaves or allow your contractor to dump the leaves into the lake. It may seem like an easy solution to dump it in the lake and walk away. Out of sight and out of mind as the saying goes, but let's quickly review several reasons why it's bad for the lake environment, bad for recreation activities on the lake and bad for you as property owners. The decomposition of organic material, such as leaves, lawn clipping and other landscape debris will increase the nutrient loading in the lake likely leading to undesirable results:

- Increased growth of vegetation along your shoreline and in the lake. Excessive vegetation in the lake can impact your ability to swim, boat and otherwise enjoy Lake Gaston.
- Potential for increased noxious algae and invasive weeds such as lyngbya and hydrilla to occur in the water around your boathouse and swimming areas.
- Increase the potential for Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs) in Lake Gaston. Some HABs can be toxic to wildlife, pets and even humans.
- Increased muck along your shoreline. Decaying organic material, as it builds up, can eventually increase nasty muck on the bottom of your shoreline and swimming area.
- Reduced dissolved oxygen in the lake as the organic material decomposes. Without adequate levels of oxygen in the water, many desirable fish and other species cannot survive.
- Increased odors from vegetation decomposition. As organic material decays and oxygen levels are depleted the decomposition can "go anaerobic" which releases hydrogen sulfide and other smelly volatile organic compounds.
- Other negative impacts to water quality. Remember that Lake Gaston is a drinking water source for many residents .

We all know that leaves and other organic material enters the lake, such as wind blown leaves, but the lake ecosystem can handle this limited amount of nutrients via natural processes. When lake residents add additional organic material to the water, the natural balance of nutrients in the lake is thrown out of balance.

Be a good steward and protect the primary reason why we choose to live here. No dumping leaves in Lake Gaston!