

## Autumn Thoughts

The landscape around us is showing signs of autumn. This year we're sadly enjoying less than spectacular colors. But, inevitably you all know what follows. Leaves, leaves, leaves & the raking that follows. And, then, disposal. For those of you who don't yet compost, you can begin by using those leaves as mulch in your garden. You can mow those piles down with your lawnmower. Attach a catcher bag, and the pile will diminish considerably in bulk & make wonderful winter mulch. Most springs I just leave the remnants in the garden; but, you can clean out your bed in the spring with the benefit of the clippings that have already composted over the winter. There's less energy wasted in disposal. And you get free compost! And your plants are the better off for it. It's win-win all around.

And here is a second thought. Not only am I a lover of flowers, my passion for plants started with a love for trees way back when I was in high school. It feels as if my beloved trees are under siege. We lost the wonderful American Chestnut before I ever got to enjoy them. Then there was the Dutch Elm Disease which continues to devastate the Elms. More recently the Woolly Adelgid started to attack our lovely native hemlocks. Now we have the Asian Longhorn Beetle and the Emerald Ash Borer. I fear for our landscape. Scientists are working hard at fighting these disasters & are even having some success with the hemlocks. But there's an onslaught on our trees that doesn't have to be taking place. I'm talking about those "volcanoes" that are surrounding so many of the trees in our public landscapes. They are really bad for trees. They choke the deep roots by preventing oxygen from getting down where it is needed. They promote shallow roots which grab all the water first. Also, the shallow roots tend to grow around the bark & "girdle" the tree's trunk. Trees need to have a spreading out, a flare, at the ground level. This flare needs to be open to the air, not covered by mulch!!! One would think that landscapers would know better; but, they don't! Those volcanoes will eventually destroy the trees they surround. Maybe not in one year or two, but by five years you will see those trees seriously weakening. So, my final message is to ask you to check out the trees on your own properties. If you've got volcanoes, remove or have them removed before they destroy the trees. Share this info with others. On a recent "This Old House" episode, Roger focused on just this issue. On the property where he went to remove volcanoes from six trees, he was able to save only one. We don't need to lose any more trees for no good reason.