

# Fall Decision: Vacuum, Shred, Rake Or Sweep?

Short of living in a climate where trees keep their foliage year-round, falling leaves are as certain as Thanksgiving. How to handle them depends a lot on you and your property. By far, the most popular method, short of hand raking, is to put an inexpensive blade attachment on your rotary power mower. The mower then acts as a leaf shredder with centrifugal force of the mower blades whisking the leaves into your catcher, or if you prefer, dropping the shreds back to the ground as a winter frost cover. There are also power

sweepers which use a rotating brush (much like street sweepers) to sweep whole leaves back into a catcher as the sweeper proceeds across the lawn. These are neat and efficient and particularly adaptable to medium sized lawns with few tight spots. Since the leaves are left whole, it is well to choose a model with a large catcher to cut down on the number of times the catcher must be emptied.

NEXT ON the list is the lawn vacuum. This is usually a push-type unit with a wide nozzle on the front. The vacuum works much like your house vacuum. The nozzle sucks in every leaf it passes over with the blower forcing the leaves into very large catcher bags. The force of the blower tends to compress the leaves in the bag so it has to be emptied less often. An advantage of the vacuum is its

ability to suck leaves from under shrubs and tight corners. Certain models even have hose attachments to clean garages and workshops. Just the opposite from the vacuum is the blower. These units are capable of creating winds of almost hurricane force to blow leaves across the lawn at each pass. Equipped with throttle controls to vary the wind velocity, the blower can pile leaves as neatly as you can with a hand rake.

If you're a gardener, you might team up one of the units above with a shredder that grinds and pulverizes leaves, stalks, trimmings, vines. Mix in some manure and or rock phosphate and you're making your own plant fertilizer. These units roll between garden rows or next to plant borders and flower beds to put your compost where it is needed.

## Garden On A Shelf Planted In Bottles

One of the wonders of first grade is seeing a sweet potato vine growing in a jar of water. There are a number of plants that will root in water, says Michigan State University horticulturist William Carlson, and with a little time and effort the homemaker can put together a bottle garden as unique as it is easy.

The plants best suited for bottle gardening include geranium, peperomia, Impatiens, wax begonia, helleborus, coleus, aucuba, ivy, aglaonema and grape ivy. Many of them have embryonic root systems at each point where a root originates. These preformed roots develop systems at each point where a root originates. These preformed roots develop rapidly when the plant is placed in water.

Any waterproof container can become the start of a bottle garden, Carlson says.

The choice between an empty pickle jar or a dainty vase depends, of course, on the location for which the container is intended. The vase might blend more harmoniously into the living room decor, for instance, while the jar might do very nicely on the kitchen windowsill.

PREPARE the container by washing it with warm soapy water, rinsing thoroughly and drying it. Wash the plants, too. Carlson advises, in soapy water with a vegetable brush. Cut off any leaves that would be below the water line and any dead or damaged foliage, and cut the plant stem just below the node, the point where a leaf originates. The cut should be sharp without damaging the stem, he notes. By grouping tall and short bottles with different types of plants, you can create a veritable garden on a shelf. Remember to replace the water lost by evaporation, Carlson says, and change the water monthly to control algae growth and keep the container clean and clear. For best results, he advises adding a water-soluble houseplant fertilizer to the water at 1/4 to 1/5 the rate recommended for potted house plants.



**WINDOW DRESSING** -- A readymade window shade of slim-ribbed cotton transforms an ordinary window into one of distinction. Used here in combination with a plaid-covered lambrquin and cotton cafe curtains, it provides a colorful background for French provincial furnishings. In translucent cotton, the Breneman shade boasts a vinyl coating that makes it durable and washable as well as fade-and-flame resistant.



## Pest Of The Week

### SLUGS

With cool, wet weather these pests multiply rapidly and emerge from damp areas of organic matter at night to eat flower and vegetable plants. Raged holes in the lower leaves and young succulent stems chewed completely off at ground level are indications they are present. Glistening slime trails are often present. These pests are like snails without shells.

**CONTROL:** Metaldehyde bran baits in the form of pellets can be broadcast on the ground under plants. The carbamates also seem to be effective as a drench to the soil. Try two tablespoons to a gallon of 50 per cent Wettable Sevin as a soil drench in areas where they hide under shrubs and other low growing plants. Commercial growers can use Zectran instead of Sevin.

Gurdon K. Dennis  
District Extension Horticultural Agent

## Drying Gourds Is Easy

**EAST LANSING**  
The odd shapes and bright colors of ornamental gourds make them a natural for indoor decorating in fall and winter.

The trick is to harvest and cure them correctly, says J. Lee Taylor, extension horticulture specialist at Michigan State University. He offers these tips:

A gourd is ready to harvest when the stem turns brown and begins to dry. Use a knife or sharp shears to cut it off the vine, he suggests, and be sure to leave about a four-inch length of stem.

Wash gourds in warm soapy water and then rinse them in a dilute disinfectant solution (five to 10 per cent chlorine bleach). Dry them and spread them on layers of newspaper in a warm, sunny place for a week.

Wipe them with a household disinfectant and spread them on newspapers in a dry, dark place for three to four weeks.

For display, the gourds may be waxed with paste wax and buffed with a soft cloth, shrunk, painted or left in their natural state.

## Wood Wins OK

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"Make the corners count!" That's the advice of Robert Huff, home improvement director, to homeowners planning a major room remodeling project. "Often a much-needed feature can be tucked into a corner without disturbing the overall traffic pattern of the room," Huff observes. "All it takes is some good planning in the design stage."

He points out that a mini hobby center can be built into a corner, as well as a home office. Benches that double as storage centers also can be included.

"It's easy to work these corner projects into the overall decor," Huff says, "because they can be paneled with the same material as used on the main walls."

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