

## Leaf Exchange Program Available for Leaf Givers & Seekers

By Ana Arias

Leaf season is upon us. With Fall sightings of pumpkin patches and the feel of crisp morning air comes the ritual of pulling out the trusty rake. Whether we typically end up with a surplus of leaves decorating our lawn, garden or roof gutters, or we seek extra leaves for mulching or composting in our yards and gardens, the Fort Collins Leaf Exchange can help us.

The City's Natural Resources Department is continuing to host the Leaf Exchange, a decentralized, email-based service through Yahoo! Groups that facilitates the swapping of leaves between folks who want leaves and those who have plenty to give away.

Simply go to <http://fcgov.com/recycling/leaf-exchnage.php>, and click on the "**program website**" link found in the explanatory text. Users with Yahoo! logins can sign in, those without one can fill out the online form and obtain a login. You can also access guidelines on how to post our "leaves wanted" or "leaves available" messages. Please make sure the leaves you exchange are free of trash, debris and large twigs.

One of the best reasons for using Leaf Exchange is that it helps us divert bag loads of leaves out of our local landfill. By matching leaf givers with seekers, we become part of a "market" where users and generators of waste materials can connect and where leaves turn into earthly commodities. When we engage in this practical and environmentally friendly approach to materials exchange, we're also contributing to our community's recycling goals. And by rounding up our leaves instead of raking them into the street or sewer systems, you'll have the gratitude of City's Streets Department and your neighbors. Excess leaves clog street sweepers and cause sewer inlets to back up and flood.

The uses for leaves can be as diverse as those in search of them. In some cases, the uses are more traditional than others.

For example, we've learned that some Fort Collins citizens want leaves to spread over a section of their lawn to create a garden in that area. Some folks pile leaves four-feet high under a piece of old carpet with slits as part of their preparation for a spring-time flower bed. Others want leaves to mulch their rose bushes over the winter.

In less traditional uses, leaves are sometimes sought by teachers and students who initiate leaf exchange programs with classes from other parts of the country or the world. They use this leaf swapping opportunity to study the life cycle of plants and learn about indigenous species from a particular region. And in China, Tanzania and Indonesia, some farmers use high-nutritive value mulberry and cassava leaves as feed supplement for sheep, goats and livestock in rural villages.