



**For immediate release**

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## **Gearing up for the Fall: Turning Leaves into Gold in Gwinnett**

Landscape refuse, such as leaves, grass clippings and trimmings, accounts for up to 20 percent of the waste being put into landfills, according to the University of Georgia. The good news is that homeowners can improve soil, conserve water and save money by turning yard waste into compost.

The **Clean Water Campaign** is partnering with the **University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service** to offer composting workshops during the month of September as a part of its *"Gardening to Protect Water Quality"* series.

Composting is an easy way to use yard trimmings and waste to enrich dry or hard soils. Gardeners often refer to composting as turning "garbage into gold." The basic premise is that brown material (leaves, straw and shredded wood) are mixed with green material (grass and food scraps) in combination with moisture, air and high temperatures to create an environment that breaks down the organic materials. The resulting rich, brown material, when worked into poor soil, like the clay soils we have in North Georgia, adds nutrients to the soil, helps retain moisture and allows plants to develop health root systems.

Composting keeps leaves, grass clippings and other yard waste from washing into storm drains during a rain. Stormwater carries yard wastes, along with nutrients and pesticides (insecticides and herbicides) that have been applied to them, untreated down streets, drainage ditches and storm drains into rivers, lakes and streams. There, the excess nutrients can cause algae to grow. The algal blooms discolor water, create unsightly scum and lead to unpleasant tastes and odors that affect the quality of water for irrigation and recreation.

Grass clippings, shrub prunings, flowers, leaves, weeds, sawdust, kitchen scraps, uncoated papers and even hair can be composted. Other kitchen wastes, including meat or fish scraps, oils, peanut butter or bones, are not suitable for the compost bin. They attract rodents and can smell. Fresh compost has a pleasant aroma.

Workshops will cover the benefits of composting, how to compost, what to put in compost, composting recipes and examples of the ideal product. Registration is required. The schedule for the workshops is below.

## **More about Composting**

Composting has been around for centuries. Nearly 4,500 years ago a set of clay tablets from the Akkadian Empire in Mesopotamia mentioned the practice. Since then, virtually every civilization including the Egyptians Greeks and Romans has engaged in the practice.

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### **Add one – Turning Leaves into Gold**

After World War II, composting declined because of the development of new fertilizers. Today, more people are looking for ways to improve soil without polluting the environment, and composting is again on the rise.

The composting workshop is scheduled on **November 3 (7:00-8:30 p.m.)** at the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center Auditorium, 75 Langley Drive, Lawrenceville, GA 30045. Registration is required. Register by calling 404-463-3259 or online [www.cleanwatercampaign.com](http://www.cleanwatercampaign.com).

*The **Clean Water Campaign** is a cooperative, multi-agency public education initiative spearheaded by local governments in metro Atlanta, supported by the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District and managed by the Atlanta Regional Commission. Its mission is to build awareness of water quality problems and solutions in the Atlanta region. For more information about the Clean Water Campaign, contact Kelley O'Brien at 404-463-3259.*

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