

League of Women Voters of Mountain Lakes
Leaves and Brush Consensus
Update April 2001

The trees in Mountain Lakes are an important part of the town's character that we all enjoy. Because of their prominence in our community, the League of Women Voters of Mountain Lakes recommends continued attention to the twin issues of 1) leaf disposal by residents and 2) leaf and brush accumulation on Borough lots.

While these issues have been the focus of attention in the past, this League study not only updated previous research on the programs in Mountain Lakes and neighboring communities, but also considered two new dimensions: 1) leaf disposal practices in light of Lyme disease concerns and 2) public opinion through a town wide survey. The study presented detailed practical and financial analysis of three leaf disposal options: composting, curbside vacuuming of leaf piles, and curbside pickup of bagged leaves. The findings of the survey revealed the polar distribution of opinion on leaf disposal and reinforce why a general solution is so difficult to agree upon.

The League's main conclusions and recommendations are:

Leaf Disposal: The League supports continuing the current Borough programs of compost promotion and leaf drop off at the Mountain Lakes Recycling Center and suggests extending weekend hours during leaf season.

In addition, we strongly recommend that the Borough offer another leaf disposal option that incorporates concerns for fairness, equitable cost allocation and safety. There were supporters and detractors for each of the three options presented, as mentioned above. Most members felt that a creative solution is necessary to meet these concerns, for example, bagged leaf pick up where the cost is shared between the user and the town.

Composting: The League continues to support the Borough's promotion of the most effective methods of composting. The study found that composting does not exacerbate the problem of Lyme disease, and therefore recommends that the Borough augment its composting program through more active education, including enlisting the help of resident consultants. In order to address aesthetic concerns of composting,

the League recommends that the Borough provide further information on building attractive enclosures and review ordinances with regard to compost enclosures on property lines.

Borough Lots: The League continues to support the natural accumulation of leaf and brush in Borough lots as it is beneficial to the whole ecosystem of Mountain Lakes. The League appreciates the responsiveness of the Borough to concerns about dumping. This has helped maintain the general good condition of the lots with regard to the dumping of leaves and brush. The League recognizes the importance of preventing dumping, and encourages continued education and enforcement, and recommends that the Borough make more residents and landscapers aware of the reporting procedures and fines.

Brush Collection: The League is generally satisfied with the solid waste contractor's monthly brush collection (from March to November). The League is concerned about how to increase awareness of the service and recommends printing the schedule on solid waste bills. Other suggestions to increase participation include allowing bundling, not tying, of longer branches.