Natural Resource Protection News

From the Town of Canandaigua Environmental Conservation Board

Smart Spring Lawn Cleanup: Be Gentle on Your Waterways

By Edith Davey

If the advent of spring inspires you with thoughts of running barefooted through lush grass, you have a lot of company. Before the joy of grass underfoot, however, there are often chores to accomplish. Spring lawn cleanup is on that list.

When removing winter debris from your lawn, please keep the health of the water around you in mind.

Blowing or raking leaves or throwing brush into a gully or road ditch means that the nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) contained in the debris will eventually reach a stream and Canandaigua Lake. Nutrients in the water support the growth of algae and water plants. One pound of phosphorus supports the growth of 500 pounds of water weeds/algae.

Far worse, pet owners facing a winter's grim accumulation of dog droppings in their yard may rake the feces along with leaves into a nearby gully or road ditch. Dog feces are rich nutrient sources. They also carry an extremely heavy load of bacteria and often contain parasites and

other pathogens that pass easily to humans.

Unfortunately, our local water bodies are already stressed with too many nutrients, as recent algae and cyanobacteria blooms attest. Leaves, sticks and feces are biodegradable, thereby adding more nutrients to those already in the water. This is highly undesirable.

So—what can you do with the leaves, brush and other prunings?

1. Shred leaves with a lawnmower. They decompose quickly and feed your grass.

2. Compost leaves and small woody debris. Compost bins range from simple wire cages to large commercial products. They all work.

3. Bring the debris to the Town of Canandaigua Transfer Center for deposit on the brush pile. It will be converted into mulch available to Town residents.

And—what can you do with the pet waste?

1. Put it in the trash.

2. Bury it in the yard about 5 inches deep where soil organisms can break it down.

3. Consider installing a dog toilet. These are special buckets with holes in the bottom placed into the ground on a bed of stones. Some makers advertise an enzyme supposed to break down feces quickly. When the bucket is full, water is poured into it to flush the broken down materials into the soil. These are placed as far away as possible from wells, water bodies and vegetable gardens.

For More Information . . .

Visit our web page for more information: **www.townofcanandaigua.org.** From the home page, select "Boards & Committees," then select "Environmental Conservation Board."

Oak Wilt Identified in the Town of Canandaigua: What You Can Do

By Russ Welser

In October 2016, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation announced that the oak wilt pathogen had been identified from an oak tree in the town of Canandaigua. It was a concerned homeowner who contacted Cornell Cooperative Extension which led to sample submission to the Cornell University Plant Disease Diagnostic Clinic for testing.

Oak wilt is a potentially devastating disease. It is a fungus that causes the tree's vascular system to plug, preventing the flow of water and nutrients within the tree. All oaks are susceptible, but oaks in the red oak group are most susceptible and once infected die within weeks to a few months. Oaks in the white oak group are less susceptible.

Oak wilt can be spread from tree to tree in two ways. One is by sap beetles carrying the fungus and the second is by way of grafted roots. It is well documented that most of the spread is by way of grafted roots.

To avoid the spread of this disease by beetles do not prune your oak trees from April–October. If a tree must be pruned during this time immediately paint the cut.

Symptoms of the disease are likely to show up in June or July. The leaves wilt and have marginal scorch (browning). It may start out on a few branches but will spread rather quickly throughout the entire tree of the red oak group.

Additional information can be found at the following web sites: **www.plantclinic.cornell.edu/oakwiltpage.html** and **www.dec.ny.gov/lands/46919.html**

If you suspect your oak tree may be infected with oak wilt contact Cornell Cooperative Extension at (585) 394-3977, extension 436.