

Leafing through the sewer systems of Eugene

■ In order to combat this fall's leaves, Eugene offers its residents disposal alternatives

By Lindsay Buchele
Oregon Daily Emerald

Leaves can be deceiving. To the average Joe, they are merely brightly covered indicators of the fall season, but to Eugene Public Works, leaves can create a major disaster to sewer and river systems.

"After falling from trees and onto the streets, leaves often get into the sewer systems and decay, causing additional pollutants to be added to the river system," said Richard Zucker, maintenance crew supervisor for the City of Eugene.

So how can the city handle these little menaces? Due to a citywide ban on outdoor leaf and debris burning, options may seem limited. First and foremost, the city encourages residents to use their leaves for mulch and fertilizer, Zucker said.

For those lacking a green thumb, the city's 20-year-old leaf collection program offers another alternative.

"We allow people to put their leaves in the street, at a reasonable distance from the road and bike lanes, and we will come along and pick them up," Zucker said.

Picking up leaves is one of the main things the city can do to keep storm drains clean. Last year, about 3,375 tons of leaves were collected by the city, Zucker said.

In the early 1990s, the program became considered a storm water service, Eugene Public Works spokesman Eric Jones said.

"It became time for cities the size of Eugene to do more with storm water," Jones said.

Funded by the fees residents pay for sewer maintenance, the program is able to use tractors, front loaders, and dump trucks to gather and distribute leaves, Jones said.

"None of our equipment is highly sophisticated, but it gets the job done," Zucker said.

The city is divided into five sections, with each section visited twice during a 10 week period, Zucker said.

After the leaves are picked up, the city does one of three things with them. The first and most popular is to deliver the leaves to Eugene residents who will use them for mulch and fertilizer.

"People can notify us if they want leaves delivered and we'll take the leaves to their homes immediately after we pick them up (from other locations)," Zucker

said. The second option is to drop the leaves off at one of the commercial recycling centers, such as Lane Forest Products and Rexius Forest By-Products.

The third option is to stockpile the leaves at one of the newer parks where unwanted yard debris can be separated from the leaves and then picked up by one of the commercial recycling centers.

The collection crews emphasize they will only pick up leaves. Any other yard debris, such as grass clippings or pruned branches, will be left behind.

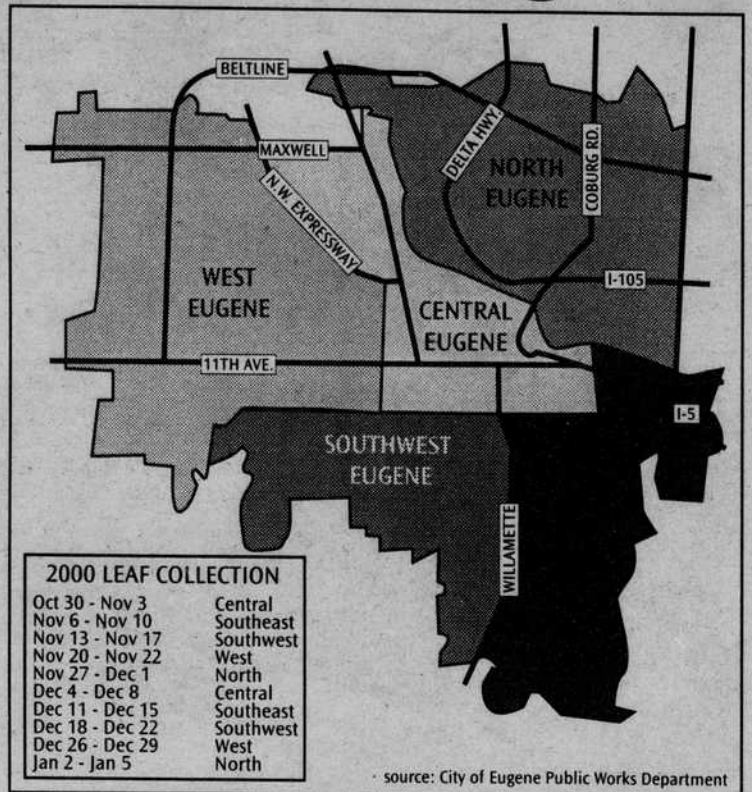
"The residences we deliver to have a high demand for leaves, but not yard debris," Jones said. "We only want clean loads."

The University does not use the city's program, but has its own recycling method.

"We collect our own leaves and put them into a compost program that is used for the entire campus," University landscape maintenance supervisor Tim King said.

King said the main objective is to keep walkways and bike paths clear for the safety of students.

"Because the campus has so many oak trees, along with other trees that lose their leaves



progressively through the winter, our job starts in early fall and lasts all the way through April," King said.

Although the campus remains independent from the city's program, the city still picks leaves in the areas surrounding campus.

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One more week to go

By Ron Fournier
The Associated Press

Al Gore reminded voters in pivotal Great Lakes states Monday that economic good times returned to America under Democratic leadership and said changing course could "drive our economy into the ditch."

Republican George W. Bush countered that a big-spending Gore would squander the nation's economic riches but said the election rests on bigger questions: "Can we bring America together? Can we move beyond petty arguments to get real results for the American people?"

Thus both Bush and Gore began the final full week of their nip-and-tuck campaign, fighting on Democratic turf and honing their close-the-sale messages.

"He's not ready to be president," Democratic running mate Joe Lieberman said of Bush while introducing Gore in Wisconsin.

Florida is considered vital to Bush, though nervous GOP strategists now say he could win the presidency without the state's 25 electoral votes by snagging Pennsylvania (23 votes) or Califor-

nia (54 votes) from Gore's column. Polls show the Pennsylvania race tied or Gore ahead, and give the vice president a lead of 5-to-10 percentage points in California.

National surveys put Bush ahead or tied with Gore in the popular vote, and the race for electoral votes is just as tight. Neither side can afford to let an attack go unanswered.

Gore's campaign denied reports that he told Arab-Americans in a private meeting Sunday that he, unlike Bush, opposes moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Jewish groups, important in states like Florida, were sure to object so Gore aides rushed to clarify: The vice president, they said, told the group he has not supported moving the embassy at this time, but did not rule it out in the future.

In a speech in New Mexico, a tossup state with just 5 electoral votes, the Bush criticized Gore's plans for schools, taxes, Social Security and the military. "Should I be elected president, I'm going to confront the hard issues," he said. "I won't take the easy way—the Washington way. I will act. And I will lead."

Calendar

Tuesday, Oct. 31

— Model United Nations: Weekly meeting offers students an opportunity to learn about various cultures, current international issues and how the United Nations works. 5 p.m. Century Room D, EMU. Free.

— International Film Festival: France's "Ma Vie En Rose" is part of a "Coming of Age" series of films shown in their original language with English subtitles. Will be shown from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in Room 122, Pacific Hall. Free.

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