

Leaf Blowers

Why we care

Gas-powered leaf blowers were first introduced to the U.S. in the 1970s. By the late '90s, sales reached more than 1 million a year. While the popular machines may make quick work of leaves, they pose risks to human health and the environment. In one hour, gas-powered leaf blowers emit as many harmful pollutants as an automobile driven over 100 miles. They also raise clouds of fine particles that may include pesticides, mold, and animal fecal matter. This is especially dangerous for children who breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. And, at 90-100 decibels, they are loud. According to the EPA, noise levels over 75 decibels can cause hearing loss. Even from 50 feet away decibel levels range from 62 to 75, negatively affecting our quality of life. Leaf blowers also deprive flowers, shrubs and trees of natural mulch needed to stop erosion, water evaporation, and loss of nutrients. Currently at least 20 California cities have some kind of ban on leaf blowers.

Simple, positive steps

- Use push brooms, rakes, or leaf sweepers.
- Put leaves to good use. Left in place they help enrich the soil and retain moisture.
- Compost leaves on site or put them in a green yard debris cart.
- Do NOT hose down or sweep leaves into the street unless you live in a [city leaf collection area](#).
- Transform lawns into gardens that don't need mowing, edging, or blowing.
- Consider an electric leaf blower that is quieter and avoids harmful emissions.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.