

**From:** Marc Samwick <[mayor@scarsdale.com](mailto:mayor@scarsdale.com)>  
**Subject: Re: Leaf Mulch Mowing is not "a silver bullet".**  
**Date:** November 18, 2020 at 3:39:20 PM EST  
**To:** Phyllis Finkelstein <[pfot@fbfinkelstein.com](mailto:pfot@fbfinkelstein.com)>  
**Cc:** [clerk@scarsdale.com](mailto:clerk@scarsdale.com)

Hi Phyllis,

Thank you for your email. We appreciate your comprehensive contribution to this discussion. While I do not expect a leaf discussion in 2020, please keep an eye out for future discussions. We welcome your continued thoughtful contribution.

Best regards,

Marc

On Nov 18, 2020, at 2:53 PM, Phyllis Finkelstein <[pfot@fbfinkelstein.com](mailto:pfot@fbfinkelstein.com)> wrote:

**CAUTION:** External sender.

To Mayor Samwick and the Board of Trustees:

I was invited to join the Leaf Education Task Force, long gone, by Mayor Steves some years ago because I was a graduate of the professional training program for gardening at the New York Botanical Gardens and had been a certified NYS pesticide applicator with a business in the horticulture industry years before. He was aware of my concerns related to the discontinuation of leaf vacuuming and substitution of leaf mulching as a leaf management solution.

First, leaves can't just be left in place because they provide ideal overwintering conditions for a burgeoning tick population. These ticks are responsible for serious conditions such as Lyme disease, and Babesiosis, both bacterial in nature and difficult to treat, and newly discovered Powassan, a virus for which there is no treatment. State health departments along the east coast all recommend removal of this "leaf debris" to create safe yards. The Task Force basically ignored this fact.

The Task Force sponsored a panel discussion composed of landscaping, gardening and horticulture professionals. While some properties lend themselves to mulch mowing to dispose of leaves, many do not. Not all leaves can be mulched as there are limits to what a lawn can tolerate. Some properties may have steep slopes where leaves fall, large trees may overhang roads and sidewalks, or some properties may have many trees and little grass. As a well-known landscaper Mike Bellantoni said "It's not a silver bullet." I continued to follow up with the representatives of Cornell Cooperative Extension who were part of the panel as I was interested in following the science, not another "urban legend" as leaf mulching was becoming. Laboratory numbers about machine emissions don't always hold up under real world conditions. I have pasted my last email from C.C.E. below, although I followed up with a call to Mr. Giordano about a year later; there were no results yet, related to environmental and funding issues.

Darlene Lefrancois Haber's letter to you and The Scarsdale Inquirer revives some of these not proven issues and presents them as fact. One such statement discussing particulate matter suspended in the air by leaf vacuuming includes "pesticides", an area in which I have some expertise. As we are disposing of

leaves dropped by deciduous trees, I'm wondering where they encountered pesticides. Evergreen trees may be sprayed for pests and diseases, but it is very unusual to spray deciduous trees. Trees are more usually inoculated through the root system as my elm is to ward off disease.

I retained numerous documents related to the work of the L.E.T.F. and would be happy to make them available should you be interested in reviewing them. The panel discussion was also recorded. I continue to see important issues related to removal of leaf vacuuming and substitution of bagging that, should you be interested in at some point, I would be happy to go into greater detail. In general, it was a very contentious proposal.

On Nov 10, 2016, at 1:46 PM, Gerald G. Giordano <[ggg3@cornell.edu](mailto:ggg3@cornell.edu)> wrote:

Dear Ms. Finkelstein,

Thank you for contacting Cornell Cooperative Extension of Westchester County with your query regarding the Cornell Waste Management Institute mulch mowing study currently in progress in Westchester County. As you know, CCE Westchester is a partner in this important project. The purpose of the study is to assess the effects of mulch mowing leaves into turf under conditions/with variables that exist on actual residential/municipal site properties. Previous university studies were performed under more controlled inputs and where some such variables did not exist. Tick populations regarding the practice of mulch mowing are also being examined. As to your specific query regarding any results/findings related to the "carbon emissions portion" of the study and when these will be released, research findings regarding this aspect will be forthcoming (along with the findings related to other parts of the study) only after the research is completed at the end of 2017. The study was designed to get three years' worth of data in order to better assess the varying conditions found during a "mowing season". Trying to interpolate results from a single season may give false results. Therefore, although we have gathered some information related to carbon emissions, we will not do any analysis of that data until the end of the third season.

Best regards,

Jerry

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Sincerely,  
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