

Donna Conkling

From: ribick@aol.com
Sent: Friday, November 20, 2015 7:21 PM
To: rkschulhof@gmail.com; Mayor; Clerk's Department
Subject: Re: Landscapers who mulch
Attachments: IMG_1498.JPG

Hi Ron (and Mayor):

Please take a look at the attached picture as it features the leaves from my property on the curb in front of it.

It was taken this afternoon.

Yes, the leaves might not be so high, or encompass the entire width of my property if I let them go into the street, but technically, we're not suppose to do that in the Village--even as I wonder what phone booth I, and the other Village residents who follow this rule would likely fit into.

My proximity to the Greenacres Elementary School provides enough reason for me to do my share to keep the roads in front of my home as wide as possible, as motorists (with school age children and large vehicles) generally don't want to travel or park over leaf piles... that is if the law or drainage concerns weren't good enough reasons to get the leaves off the street.

Curbside leaf pickup: for the record I'm expressly not complaining about its frequency. A crew was by my house less than 2 weeks ago. And so context is achieved, I'd say, looking at my trees, I'm about 70% done with leaves this year.

In fairness, I probably have a lot of deciduous trees compared to my property size, as that metric is then compared to other Village residents. But hardly am I alone in residence here with such a large metric, nor by any means would my property hold any Village records on this.

The notion that given the number of trees I have (and I lost one of my biggest during super storm Sandy) that I could mulch in place is not realistic. It would smother and kill the grass. No matter how fine a dust could be made of said droppings, increasing its surface area to volume ratio, and therefore its rate of decomposition, said decomposing organisms only work so fast, particularly in the cooler temperatures of Fall, as compared to summer.

Mulching bagging mowers---I have a personal relationship with its inventor/patent holder. He can't get someone to license his patent <http://topdownengineering.com/products/direct-bag-it/> and he won't directly offer it to consumers either given the inherent need for tons of liability insurance he can't afford given the danger of a product hard wired to a lawn mower.

I completely get the irrationality of removing nitrogen rich leaves using fossil fuels, for their conversion into fertilizer I then buy. I get how I could cut my trees down, local laws limiting same notwithstanding, and then "rent my roof" to a solar contractor (after first replacing the roof), to offset the cost of additional air conditioning that lack of shade will require me to have. At least I won't burn more fossil fuels for the energy given that my trees will no longer (temporarily) absorb carbon dioxide. Sadly, I don't get tax credits for the carbon dioxide my trees absorb, that others create. I also don't get subsidized for the cost of their care, or the damage they can produce in storms.

(Trees temporarily turn carbon dioxide into mass until they give it up in decomposition--either through their combustion or decomposition on the forest floor, even if unlike fossil fuels, more trees can be planted to offset those cut down. It may take 20 years, or it may take 2000 (or something in between) , but to the ecologist, it's just a matter of time.)

Elimination of curbside leaf removal won't come with tax credits. Paying for it privately won't allow me to lawfully deduct its costs, which are most efficiently handled at the municipal level, not with 30 gardening contractors all buying miniaturized versions of what the Village uses (see the Village School district's machine for example) and passing this cost on to their clients (me).

Monopolies (overseen and regulated) on service should exist in situations where large infrastructure costs to market entry, and redundancy of services are at play, like here. By way of metaphor, there's a reason we only have 1 set of telephone poles.

I own a Leaf Mulcher. It's a "toy" given the amount of leaves I have to mulch. <http://www.amazon.com/Flowtron-Ultimate-Mulcher-Electric-Shredder/dp/B00006XMTM>. I've tried to mulch my leaves into lawn bags, so I know.

Call the mulching program "green." I'm all for mulching as many of my leaves in situ as my lawn can handle so as to keep costs (environmental and financial) down. But call it "green" for as much the environmental benefits as the financial ones to government. Be honest with the public about your motivations.

I get it. Legacy health care commitments to retired employees are drowning local governments who are already taxing their residents to the max. Governments county wide have or will be abandoning their collection programs.

But Scarsdale is a Village in a Forest. And it's hard enough to grow grass in a forest given the shade that live leaves provide, let alone the lawn their dropping on and not being removed from can smother.

Russ Kopp

12 Sage Terrace

-----Original Message-----

From: Ron Schulhof <rkschulhof@gmail.com>
To: Russell Kopp <ribick@aol.com>
Sent: Mon, Nov 9, 2015 8:50 pm
Subject: Re: Landscapers who mulch

Hi Russ - we spoke and traded a few emails last year around this time after the leaf pickup hearings. You had mentioned you were interesting in trying mulching this year (think I sent over a list of landscapers who mulch/mow) and I was just curious to hear about your experiences with it. Hope all else is well.

Regards

Ron Schulhof

On Wed, Nov 26, 2014 at 7:07 PM, Ron Schulhof <rkschulhof@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Russ - thanks for your note. I appreciate hearing your thoughts on the issue. I thought last night we had a great meeting with a lot of thoughtful comments from all sides. It would definitely be interesting to see a landscape where turf lawns weren't the predominant feature! When I go for runs around Scarsdale I do see some properties like this, but for sure they are few and far between.

As you look into mulching on your property, or if you know others thinking about it, please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions about the process, landscapers, equipment, etc. I'm always happy to share my experiences or put folks in touch with someone best suited to answer their questions.

Hope you have a great holiday!
Ron

On Wed, Nov 26, 2014 at 1:20 PM, <ribick@aol.com> wrote:
Thanks for the list Ron.

I feel compelled to point out that I am not the abrasive individual who took the podium last night on a mission.

Perhaps almost independent of whether Village vacuuming could be done away with, or whether I/we can successfully mulch the entirety of our leaves in situ, I took issue with the Village trying to push this reduction in services on the public as an environmental, rather than the financial issue it really is to them. As so well pointed out by another speaker, mulching won't happen overnight. Its integration may be similar in speed to that of making recycling an every day part of sanitation practices. Accordingly, vacuum services elimination shouldn't happen overnight either.

Sadly, sometimes our Village Boards do stupid knee jerk things when money is at stake, and they don't want to be the "Board that raised taxes," rather than considering other approaches. Several years ago the NYS EPA was on the Board's back for elevated levels of E. Coli in the Bronx River. As I understand it, the Board decided that rather than spend funds to legally fight the NYS EPA in this matter, it was cheaper to establish a "window dressing" Village law, that nobody would enforce, making it illegal to publicly walk your dog (even if you immediately clean up after it) within our Village confines.

Of course it's stupid (and I would argue unconstitutional) to establish laws you don't intend on enforcing. They become fodder for those lists of the "world's most stupidest laws," like the ones in place, I believe in Florida, that although unenforced, and probably unconstitutional, limit the number of single women under one roof, based on the original intent 100's of years ago when placed on the books, of limiting brothels.

So a couple of (college post graduate) women, lucky enough to find jobs in this economy, but jobs that pay so little that they are forced to share space under one roof, should on top of these burdens, be jailed for doing so?

I'm rambling, sorry. Anyway, I learned more about high shredding mulching blades last night, and about a success story at a property similar to mine in terms of sq. footage and tree density. The woman who spoke of her success made the excellent and known point of there being something wrong with the expense and consumption of fossil fuels to haul these leaves out of the Village, to only and ultimately turn them into fertilizer, transported once again back to a local retailer.

If I can make mulching wor, I will. I just fear reaching the point where despite cutting the leaves into dime size pieces so as to speed their decomposition, their decomposition occurs slower than the time it takes for said mulch to smother the lawn.

Ron, you can bear witness to my introduction into the vernacular of a new phrase that perhaps one day I can trademark: "lawn reduced property." Perhaps a decade from now prospective home buyers will read this term in a property bio and realize this as a property feature that reduces expenses, no differently than solar or geothermal power. But right now, curb appeal means clean, property- to-property line grass. Until such attitudes are changed, people who can afford leaf removal may continue to opt to do so, even if they have to seek such services at notably higher prices in the marketplace.

Regards,

Russ Kopp

-----Original Message-----

From: Ron Schulhof <rkschulhof@gmail.com>

To: ribick <ribick@aol.com>

Sent: Wed, Nov 26, 2014 11:00 am

Subject: Landscapers who mulch

Hi - this is Ron Schulhof from the meeting last night. Attached is a copy of some Scarsdale landscapers who provide mulching services. If you have any questions about the list or mulching in general feel free to reach out. [914.723.0457](tel:914.723.0457)

Happy holidays

Ron