

Making Fall's Chore Safe for You, Safe for the Planet



Not looking forward to cleaning the yard this fall? Raking has a bunch of benefits beyond beautifying your lawn:

1. It reduces fuel that can feed a wildfire.
2. If you compost, it's good for the environment.
3. It's exercise! Raking builds body strength and works off calories.

But before you tackle fall's chore with new found enthusiasm, check out these tips to help ensure your safety and protect the planet:

Safety first

Dress the part. A must is hearing protection if you're using power tools and equipment. Also, protect yourself with safety goggles, sturdy shoes, long pants and gloves. Wear layers you can peel off if you get warm. Be sure you're up on your tetanus shots—adults should get one every 10 years.

Limber up. Raking uses almost all muscles in your body, so you should warm up before gearing up. Walk around the yard, do circular arm movements, bend forward, backward and to each side, then finish with some gentle stretches.

Posture perfect. An ideal way to rake is to hold the end of the handle with one hand and three-quarters of the way down the handle with the other. Try not to twist your spine, but rather move your whole body. Switching sides every few minutes can balance the strain to your lower back.

Go slow. If you're not used to this much exertion, take frequent breaks from raking—stretch and drink plenty of water. You could also spread raking and bagging over several days to minimize the stress on your body.

Afternoon allergies. If you are prone to pollen allergies, note that the afternoon is the worst time to work outdoors. Early morning and evening are the best times. You might also wear a pollen mask, hat, gloves and big sunglasses to reduce exposure. Continue to mow through the fall to keep grass from flowering and producing pollen.

Green matters

Bag the bag. If you have a lot of leaves to bag, you could compost them instead. What you'd get is nutrient-rich, organic soil that you can use for gardening in the spring. Here are some [tips on composting](#).

Power down. Power tools can create a lot of noise pollution. Indeed, one gas-powered leaf blower can produce as much pollution as 80 cars.¹ Electric tools are better, but the best is raking. There's no noise pollution and your neighbors will thank you.

Fertilize, naturally. If you're preparing your soil for next year, use organic, slow release fertilizers made of natural materials. Or, you can use the compost you created yourself.

If fall also finds you closing up a new pool or hot tub*, you might consider further protecting it by adding a bit of extra insurance to your Kemper homeowners policy. **Ask your agent for details.**

*Restrictions apply
¹earthshare.org

Sources: CDC, earthshare.org, aarp.org