



**Spring and summer present some great opportunities for home owners and gardeners to use material that would ordinarily go to the landfill.**

## Spring

**Debris:** After the snow melts, there is always a layer of winter “detritus” – old leaves, dead tree limbs, twigs and branches knocked down by the wind and snow. Instead of collecting it all, bagging it and dragging it to the curb, why not just mow it up the first time you cut the grass and leave it on the lawn? Broken up, all of this organic matter will quickly become food for the beneficial organisms that keep lawns, trees and shrubs healthy. It will all “disappear” after the second or third mowing.



If you want to rake up the debris, why not use it as mulch by placing an inch or two under trees and shrubs? Not only will this help keep water in the root zone and feed the microbes the tree needs to stay healthy, but it will keep out weeds. Organic matter is too valuable to send to the landfill.

**Garden Bed Clean-up:** All that stuff that comes out of the gardens from last year as you plant and clean up your beds is great stuff for mulching the very same beds from which it came. Think about it. There is no bare soil in Nature and there shouldn't be in your yard. That is what all this free organic matter is intended for.



**Compost pile:** All yards should have a compost pile. The pile must be at least one cubic yard in size, but it will reduce the volume of organic waste from your property by decaying it and leaving you with compost. There is nothing like homemade compost to feed the plants around your yard. All you do is mix three parts grass clippings to one part brown, carbon-rich material like fall leaves.

Here is the biggest problem with making composting in Alaska. You need to have enough carbon rich “brown” materials on hand. The nitrogen rich “green” materials are as plentiful as grass clippings. Not so brown materials. So spring is a great time to collect brown materials, including what your neighbors may not want. Now you can keep feeding your pile and make compost all summer long.

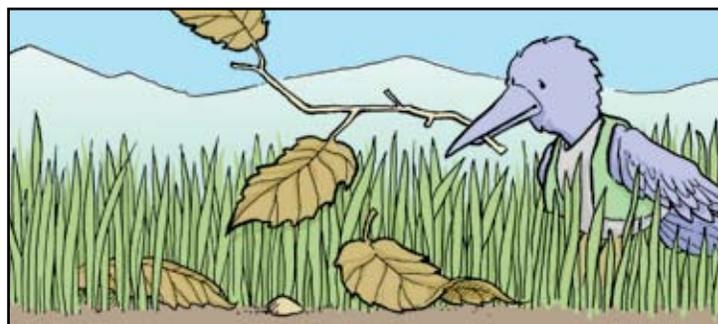
## Summer

**Grass clippings:** Grass clippings are almost all the fertilizer your lawn needs. They belong on the lawn, not in a bag. This will not only save on fertilizer costs but pushing a lawn mower full of grass clippings that are 90% water is really a lot of work, literally tons of it. There is no need. Just leave those organic clippings where they fall. The only time to bag is for a little compost kicker green material.



**Pruning material:** Chipping up those tree branches or lilac limbs you pruned makes an excellent mulch that can be used under trees and shrubs or in a compost pile where they supply carbon.

**Compost Pile:** You don't need to use a valuable sunny gardening spot for your pile. It is the microbes in the compost pile that will heat it up, not the sun. Choose a spot where you can store piles of material and have enough room to turn the pile. It's the most sustainable way to handle organic wastes produced in your yard.



In short, what falls down on your property and what grows there can almost all be disposed of in a sustainable way right where it came from. Take advantage of the organic refuse on your property.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Anchorage Soil & Water Conservation District (ASWCD) for information about home composting. [www.aswcd.org](http://www.aswcd.org)

If you do want to get organics off your property, take it to a local composter. If you have big tree limbs and brush, these materials can go to one of several seasonally operated woodlots. Contact the following organizations for locations, hours, fees, and accepted materials.

**Evergreen Nursery**  
344-2588

<http://alaskaevergreen.com>

**Muni Woodlots (Eagle River/Girdwood)**  
267-4980

[www.muni.org/fire1/Woodlots.cfm](http://www.muni.org/fire1/Woodlots.cfm)

**ASWCD Woodlot (Anchorage)**  
677-SOIL

[www.aswcd.org/woodlot.html](http://www.aswcd.org/woodlot.html)

Be sure to cover and secure your load.