Maybe this is the year you decide to compost leaves rather than rake and bag them to put on the curb. Composting recycles a waste product into a product which will improve soil structure, increase water retention and improve root penetration. Adding compost to clay soils makes them easier to work and plant. In sandy soil the addition of compost improves the water holding capacity of the soil. You will have little need for lawn waste bags and will use your garbage disposal less too.

Choose a corner of your lot to build or buy a compost bin. To build, set up pallets next to a chain link fence using 4'x 4' pallets on the bottom and 2 sides with one side open for access.

Composting components:

1) Browns- dead brown material from your yard like leaves, dead plant material, shredded newspaper and some manures like cow, horse, sheep, poultry and rabbit.
2) Greens- grass clippings, trimmed plant material, weeds without seeds, vegetable or fruit waste, tea and coffee grounds.
3) Water-water the materials until damp or let Mother Nature do it for you.
4) Air – It is best to turn your compost 1/x week or roll the tumbler. This helps the materials decompose faster and keeps the materials from giving off a foul odor.
5) Do not compost meat, bones, fats, grease, fish, grains, breads, dairy, wood dust, dog-cat- or bird manure, black walnut leaves, diseased plants, or weeds with seeds.

It takes about 4 months to a year to finish composting, but turning it once a week and keeping it moist speeds up the process. Set up two piles: one that has decomposed partially and a second one that you start adding new material to at the beginning of a new season.

Start composting - the planet and your plants will thank you!