

Protect Your Heritage

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

— Chief Seattle

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The Park District's Vision for Walnut Park

The Downers Grove Park District is planning for development of its Walnut Park Site along Walnut Avenue between Burlington Avenue and Ogden Avenue. The Belmont Prairie Nature Preserve is a little to the southeast with its protective Prairie Buffer directly south of the Walnut Park Site. Belmont Prairie is a rare, 10-acre remnant of the region's originally wide-spread



*Walnut Park Area
Current State*

prairies. Belmont Prairie is recognized and protected as a dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve.

The plan is to have active recreational facilities in the northern portion of the park with outdoor soccer fields and a domed indoor facility together with passive/nature recreation in the southern portion. Plans for the southern portion



*Walnut Park Area
2021 Master Plan*

indicate enhancements to the Prairie Buffer with improvements to the trails as well as a nature pavilion to support educational programs in Burlington and Walnut area to the southwest of the Prairie Buffer.

Plans for improvements in the Prairie Buffer offer a fine opportunity to highlight the Buffer's crucial role in protecting Belmont Prairie as a highest quality natural resource. PDHA is following this planning process closely. We met with Park District officials, presented comments to the Park Board and submitted comments to the Park District's public-outreach process.

Our main points of emphasis are (1) ensure careful planning to avoid adverse impacts to drainage and hydrology of the Prairie and its Buffer; (2) improve the Prairie Buffer by a long-term program to remove invasive species and restore the Buffer to a prairie-savanna landscape; (3) highlight the importance of the Belmont Prairie to our community through improvements to its trails, signage, and opportunities for education; and (4) establish a natural areas advisory group to participate more formally in planning and stewardship for our irreplaceable natural areas.

So far the news is encouraging: Park District leadership has been receptive to a balanced approach of active and passive recreation for the area. PDHA will continue to follow this issue closely, and we urge everyone to learn more about the plans and add their comments. Information about the Park District's planning process and a feedback form for your comments are available at <https://www.dgparks.org/walnut-park-master-plan>. - Ken Lerner & Chris Saricks

Protect Your Heritage

PDHA Directors

Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance is a 25-year old, Illinois not-for-profit corporation with charitable group status from the Internal Revenue Service. PDHA's Board of Directors manages its activities.

The following people are

PDHA Officers:

Chair Ken Lerner,

Chair Pro-Tem
Chris Saricks,

Secretary
Mark Bragen,

Treasurer
Gordon Goodman,
and

PDHA Directors:

Marge Earl,
Sue Farley,
Rich Kulovany,
John Schofield,
& Mark Thoman

We welcome Sue Farley to our governing board and thank

Irene Hogstrom for her years of outstanding service as a director.

Newsletter

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What Do I Do with All the Leaves?

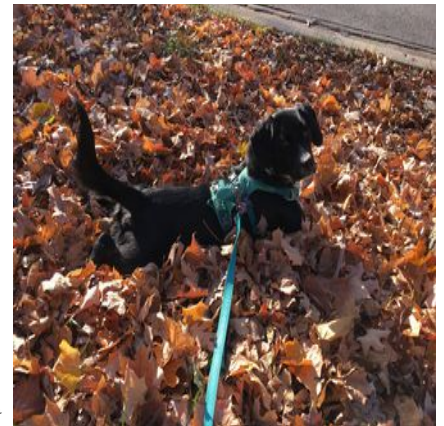
Nature is putting on its annual, colorful spectacle again as the leaves change to brilliant shades of red, yellow, and orange. Unfortunately, this doesn't last forever, and the leaves will fall to the ground. Then what do you do?

In the old days, common wisdom was to rake the leaves together, bag them, and then send them off to leave the lawn looking nice and tidy. Or maybe make a pile by the curb and burn them. In any case, we wouldn't leave leaves on the ground as we were told doing so would kill the grass.

Now soil scientists are recommending using the nutrients from decaying leaves to enhance the fertility of your soil. But how do we do this?

Here are few ways to use leaves to benefit your lawn and garden:

1. **Compost Them.** If you are already composting plant matter and food scraps, adding leaves is one way to add carbon to normally nitrogen rich mixture. The plant matter feeds the bacteria that will break down the leaves. You will need to wet the mixture if it becomes dry and mix the compost with a pitchfork or shovel to help aerate the pile. The compost is then mixed in with your soil when planting in the spring. Not all leaves are good candidates for composting. Some, like, holly, oak, and beech are low in both calcium and nitrogen. While others, such as black walnut, can cause your plants not to grow due to natural herbicides.
2. **Make Leaf Mold.** Leaf mold is a soil conditioner high in calcium and magnesium. Simply create a large pile of leaves and just keep them moist. Over time, the leaves will decay and become the soil conditioner. Granted, it may take one to three years to complete the transition from leaves to conditioner, but there really is minimal effort beyond creating the pile. Shredding the leaves will make the decaying process happen faster.
3. **Mulch Them.** Leaves work well at keeping weed growth at bay and retaining water. Shredding the leaves makes an attractive mulch and is much cheaper than store-bought.
4. **Insulate Your Plants.** You can pack leaves around tender plants and perennials to keep them insulated and warm. You can then spread the leaves around the soil as mulch.
5. **Mow Leaves into Your Lawn.** You can get benefits of leaf decay simply by mowing your lawn with the leaves in place. Using a mulching mower works best but any mower will provide you with the benefits.
6. **Leave Them Alone.** Some are advising just leaving the leaves where they fall (although your neighbors may not be too happy on windy days).
7. **Leaves are Beneficial to Wildlife.** Bees, moths, butterflies, snails, spiders, and other pollinators depend on the warmth and safety provided by a pile of leaves.



Hopefully, you'll have some help as I do. - Mark Bragen

References:

<https://www.treehugger.com/skip-rake-and-leave-leaves-healthier-greener-yard-4858786>

<https://morningchores.com/uses-for-fallen-leaves/>

<https://www.almanac.com/what-do-fall-leaves>

[Tree Board Encourages Leaving Fallen Leaves - NewsBreak](#)

PDHA Donates Tree for Park District 75th Anniversary

For the last 75 years, the Downers Grove Park District has enriched the community through natural area preservation. The District is celebrating its 75th



anniversary by planting 75 trees in two parks, Hoopers Hollow and O'Brien Park. PDHA is proud to support this effort by sponsoring one of these trees. - Ken Lerner



Tree Planting in Hoopers Hollow, October 2021

Wildflower Walks at Belmont Prairie



Lance Herning (left) led Belmont Prairie Wildflower Walks in August 2021

Covid-19 threw a monkey wrench in our usual schedule for conducting wildflower walks, both last year and this year. By August however it seemed feasible to hold outdoor activities again, and we were able to conduct guided walks at Belmont Prairie. Intrepid naturalist Lance Herning gave his usual informative tour. The popularity of these walks appears to be growing as this year we had more signups than we could include on one tour. Lance graciously agreed to host an additional walk to accommodate the overflow. We had excellent weather and a good time was had by all. - Ken Lerner

PDHA Planning Memorials

PDHA is planning memorial trees and plaques to honor two departed village officials, former mayor Betty Cheever and former public works director Nan Newlon.

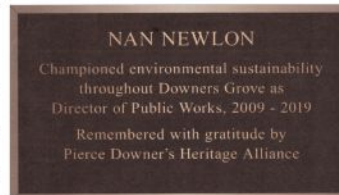
Nan Newlon, public works director from 2009 to 2019, emphasized environmental sustainability in village public works. She pioneered many green initiatives including solar panels in village facilities, a green fleet of hybrid and CNG vehicles, rain gardens and pollinator gardens, recycling events, and sale events for rain barrels and native trees. Through her efforts, the Village received numerous awards for good planning and environmentally friendly practices.

PDHA is honoring Betty Cheever for her lifetime of leadership in civic causes. Betty faithfully served as a judge of elections and was active in the League of Women Voters serving as the Downers Grove, Woodridge, Lisle Chapter's President 1969-1973. Betty was Plan Commission Chair before serving as Mayor 1983-1999. As Mayor Betty Cheever played a key role in achieving public ownership of the Lyman Woods Preserve.

We hope to dedicate Nan Newlon's tree and plaque this fall, and Betty Cheever's in the spring. Check www.pdha.org for details. - Ken Lerner & Gordon Goodman



Nan Newlon's Tree



Please Join Us On Our 2022 Highland Ave. Adopt-A-Highway CLEAN-UP DAYS

*April 16
June 11
August 13
October 1*

Saturday 8:30-10:30 AM

Visit our website to sign up to participate!

Have you renewed your membership in the Heritage Alliance?

See the back page of this newsletter for more info and how YOU can make a difference!



Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance
P.O. Box 422
Downers Grove, Illinois 60515

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Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance Fall 2021 Newsletter

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Check our website www.PDHA.org for more information.

Your membership
in the Alliance
helps in our
efforts to petition
local government
officials to
preserve our
heritage resources.
Your participation
in our programs
demonstrates to
our community
the strength of
our alliance to
protect Downers
Grove's natural and
cultural heritage.

Please join Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance or renew your membership now as we work for protection of the natural and cultural heritage of Downers Grove.

Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance
P .O. Box 422, Downers Grove, IL 60515

Yes, I want to begin/renew my membership in Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance.

Name(s): _____

Street Address: _____ Telephone: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ Email Address: _____

Contribution: \$ _____ (Employer matching contribution?) _____ I/We can also volunteer some time.

[A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION of \\$10](#) or more will help the Alliance defray expenses, but is **not** required for membership. Your email address will allow us to keep you informed of future events.

[Email us at info@pdha.org](mailto:info@pdha.org) to receive your PDHA Newsletter in its full color digital version with live action links to additional online information!