

WARNING!

BURNING LEAVES MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH

The amount of fires being set to burn leaves in residential areas in Harare has dramatically increased, leading to an increase in potential health problems in humans due to air pollution.

WHY SHOULD YOU BE CONCERNED?

The open burning of leaves produces particulate matter and hydrocarbons similar to those found in tobacco smoke, which contain a number of toxic, irritant, and carcinogenic (cancer-causing) compounds, as well as carbon monoxide. Burning leaves contributes to climate change which means a bleaker future for our children.

- The particulate matter consists of tiny particles (<10 microns) that can reach the deepest regions of the lung and remain there for months or even years. Breathing particulate matter can increase the chances of respiratory infection, reduce the volume of air inhaled and impair the lungs' ability to use that air. Particulate matter can also trigger asthma attacks in some people, especially children and the elderly.
- Because leaves are often moist and burn without proper air circulation, they often burn poorly, producing high levels of hydrocarbons. Hydrocarbons are chemicals, e.g. aldehydes and ketones, that can cause irritation of the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs, and can cause cancer in the long term.
- Carbon monoxide is an invisible gas that results from incomplete combustion in burning leaf piles. Carbon monoxide is absorbed into the bloodstream through the lungs and combines with red blood cells. This reduces the amount of oxygen the red blood cells can absorb and supply to body tissues. Unborn children, newborn infants, smokers, the elderly, and persons with heart and chronic lung disease are the most susceptible to carbon monoxide.

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE?

Make compost!

Composting is a simple process that involves placing yard trimmings and other organic materials such as vegetable peelings into a pile or bin. Microorganisms gradually break down the yard trimmings into a humus-like product called compost. This process is speeded up by watering the compost heap and turning it occasionally to mix in oxygen. You can cover with plastic once watered to keep the moisture in.

How do I use compost?

It can be used as a mulch in flowerbeds and around shrubs, or it can be added to the garden or to potting soils as a soil conditioner. It can also be spread on lawns as a top dressing. Composting is a form of recycling and helps reduce soil compaction and erosion. It helps soil retain moisture and nutrients as well as increasing soil fertility. When leaves are composted along with grass clippings, which contain nitrogen, the resulting compost can also serve as an organic fertilizer.

**BURNING OF LEAF LITTER, PLASTIC OR ANY OTHER MATERIAL WHICH RELEASES TOXINS IS
ILLEGAL -
FINES ARE IN PLACE FOR OFFENDERS!**

TO REPORT BURNING CALL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AGENCY (EMA) ON

792772 OR 077213347 OR 0773002134