



Clean & Green



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It's that time of year again! The beautiful fall foliage paints the scene around campus with the shades of the season. Fiery Red, Golden-Yellow, Orange, and Green are visible everywhere as the beautiful Maple, Sweetgum, Gingko, Serviceberry, Dogwood, and other trees display their seasonal allure. The more mature trees on the West side of campus, especially those near Peck Hall, JUB, and the President's Lawn, provide some picturesque views for those who venture through this area of campus during the fall.

As beautiful as the foliage may be, it also creates a lot of maintenance issues. Leaves left on the ground for a long time will damage the turf as it reduces the sunlight and oxygen needed to survive. Leaves will also accumulate in stairwells and road drains that can create issues during rain events. Keeping sidewalks cleared can be a tough task during the autumn months as well.

Our Grounds Department will spend the fall season making sure leaves on campus are kept under control. We use our mowers to cut leaves into tiny pieces so they don't smother and damage the turf. The small pieces of leaves will decompose over time and will become nutrients that feed the turf. We use blowers to clean out landscape beds and from under trees so that our mowers can get to the leaves. We may use a zero-turn mower to bag the leaves in certain areas such as the Hall of Fame or Alumni House where we have a lot of leaves that fall on a small area. Our blowers blow off sidewalks every morning so people arriving to campus will have clear sidewalks to walk on. Our street sweeper runs every day making sure that leaves do not accumulate on roads or clog storm drains. We clean out stairwells on days when it's raining or too wet to cut leaves. This is a continual process until the leaves are all gone from the trees.

I'm often asked what our Grounds crew does in the winter months after mowing season ends. My answer usually begins with talking about the level of effort that it takes to keep up with leaves falling. The process of keeping campus cleaned up from leaves takes several months and we typically don't finish until mid-December at the earliest. Some trees, especially some varieties of Oaks, will hold onto some amount of leaves until January or February. During the peak of leaves falling, it is virtually impossible to keep areas cleared. We will clean an area during the morning and by mid-afternoon, so many leaves have fallen that it looks like we haven't even been there. We have to stay on top of it though or the leaves will get so thick that it really slows down the process and can even clog up or damage our equipment.

We strive to make sure our campus is *Clean & Green* year round. During the autumn season we don't have as much *Green* as it has given way to the Red, Yellow, and Orange of fall. That means most days are dedicated to a variety of leaf clean-up activities. While you enjoy the views and foliage this fall, know that your Grounds Crew is working hard to make sure our campus remains *Safe, Clean, and Functional*.



