

Council Encourages Residents to Help Keep Streets Leaf-free

As Autumn gets a hold on the seasons, Edinburgh's trees are once again beginning to shed their leaves.

The Council's street cleansing team is taking action to keep the streets leaf-free so that they're as safe and accessible as possible during the autumn months – and we're calling on the public to do their bit to help.

So with temperatures plummeting and nights drawing in, tonnes of 'organic' waste are swept and collected from Edinburgh's streets and sent to be recycled into compost. Planning ahead for leaf-clearing requires a dynamic approach as so much is weather-dependant and a hard frost can cause a large volume of leaves to fall.

Six mechanical sweepers supplement hand-sweeping by street cleansing operatives, targeting vulnerable locations as a priority, including cycle routes and areas around sheltered housing, for example. The team also responds as quickly as possible to deal with leaf-strewn pavements reported by the public.



Council workers doing their bit

Around 7,000 of the city's 650,000+ trees (more trees than residents!) are street trees looked after by the Council, with many thousands more in public parks and green spaces. Around half of Edinburgh's trees – approximately 325,000 – grow in private gardens and on private land, with many of these overhanging, and shedding a high proportion of their leaves on to, public pavements.

Today, Environment Convener Councillor Lesley Macinnes called on residents to help the Council keep our shared pavements leaf-free by doing their bit to clear up leaves originating from trees in their own gardens.

Local residents' body the Grange Association already organises annual leaf clean-ups in their community thanks to assistance from the Council's street cleansing team. This year, the Association have requested 400 'rubble' bags alongside brushes and shovels.

The full bags will be collected for recycling by a street cleansing vehicle and the rubble bags re-used. Approaches from other community groups keen to undertake similar leaf-clearing exercises locally are actively encouraged.

Cllr. Macinnes said: “Edinburgh has more trees than residents and it’s wonderful to live in such a leafy, green city. However, when autumn comes around, clearing leaves presents a real challenge; our response has to be dynamic and flexible each year due to seasonal variations and changes in leaf fall rate among different species of trees in the city.

“We deploy a dedicated fleet of mechanical sweepers to help street cleansing staff remove leaves manually and are always careful to prioritise cycle routes and vulnerable locations like sheltered housing.



Grange residents helping out during last year’s campaign
“We can’t be everywhere at once, though, and all it takes is a

sudden hard frost for Edinburgh's pavements to become covered in a thick carpet of leaves. And the inescapable fact is that a significant proportion of leaves falling on the pavements come directly from trees in private gardens that overhang public roads.

"That's why today we're urging everyone to follow the excellent example set by the Grange Association in helping us tackle the issue. After all, you'd clear up your hedge clippings, so why not leaves, too?"

"We're more than happy to supply bags and equipment (and collect full bags for recycling) to groups who want to do their bit to help us keep their local pavements clear and accessible, especially for the less mobile members of the community. Together we can leave Edinburgh's streets safe and leaf-free."

Sue Tritton, a member of the Grange Association, said: "We have a large group of volunteers who helped, in the autumn of 2018, to clear leaves from the street. This effort was much appreciated by local residents and more volunteers joined this year."

"The Council provides us with bags, brushes and shovels and collects the filled bags (about 350 so far this year) which are then recycled. Some of us work in groups to clear particular streets; others work near their homes. It's nice to be out in the fresh air knowing that you are helping to keep the area clean and safe."