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**RECORD**  **REVIEW**

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Kim Eierman  
Founder  
EcoBeneficial LLC

Mr. Ed Baum  
Editor  
The Bedford Pound Ridge Record-Review  
Bedford Hills, New York 10507

Dear Mr. Baum:

As towns in Westchester debate potential bans on gas-powered leaf blowers, it is worthwhile to consider the ecological benefits of nature's gold – leaves – and what they do for the environment. Here are some ecological reasons to put down the blowers and show leaves some love:

Fallen leaves “feed” the soil

When fallen leaves decay, they become natural compost, releasing nutrients into the soil. These nutrients enable plants to grow and be healthy. It is a natural process of nutrient cycling. And, soil that has more organic matter is better able to retain moisture – especially critical in times of drought.

Fallen leaves are nature's mulch

Decaying leaves act as nature's mulch – they retain moisture in the soil, they protect soil from erosion and compaction, and they suppress unwanted weeds. Fallen leaves can be especially protective for many shallow-rooted plants like rhododendrons, azaleas and mountain laurels.

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Fallen leaves help to create a complex food web

Decaying leaves support millions of small organisms, including bacteria and fungi, nematodes and springtails, millipedes and insect larvae which eat their way through the leaves, breaking down their carbon compounds, releasing nutrients into the soil. Within the leaf litter layer there are creatures that eat other creatures and in turn, are eaten by others. Like songbirds? Keep your leaves in place. The vast majority of songbirds feed insects to their young, and the leaf litter layer is their insect buffet.

Fallen leaves provide habitat to many creatures

“Leaf litter” – those nice layers of decomposing leaves, serve as habitat, cover and foraging areas for many creatures. From microscopic fungi to ants, beetles, snails, salamanders, reptiles, and even some birds and mammals use leaf litter as their home and a foraging source. Love butterflies? Leave leaves alone as many butterfly species overwinter as pupae in the leaf litter layer.