



Think Before You Dump: The Environmental Consequences of Disposing Yard Waste in the Woods



Have you ever been tempted to toss your yard waste in the woods? Dumping of yard waste is the most frequent encroachment we see on BCT properties. Disposing of organic material such as grass clippings, leaves, or branches in the woods might seem harmless, but it can damage the environment and wildlife.

Dumping yard waste in the woods can introduce non-native and invasive species, disrupting the natural ecosystem. Non-native species can take root and outcompete native vegetation, reducing the overall biodiversity. Additionally, the decomposition of yard waste can release nutrients that cause harmful algae blooms in nearby waters such as our freshwater ponds and wetlands. Evidence of this is present every summer, with an increasing number of cyanobacteria algae blooms reported in many ponds across Cape Cod.

Discarded yard waste can attract unwanted pests such as rodents. Piles of lawn clippings attract rats, who will attempt to make nests in the waste mounds. This could lead to an increase in their population, which can spread to nearby homes and businesses. Dumping yard waste can even create a fire hazard, as the dry organic material can easily ignite and spread flames.

It is also important to remember that disposing of yard waste on someone else's property is illegal and carries the same penalties as dumping non-organic garbage. Proper disposal of yard waste can be achieved through composting, taking it to your local recycling center, or through locally approved burning.

So, while it may be tempting to dispose of yard waste in the woods, it's best to consider the possible adverse effects on the environment and wildlife. Proper yard waste disposal can help protect and conserve the natural world around us.