



# Yard Waste is Not Wasted!

## Part 1: What to do with Green “Waste”

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Sheltering-in-place has many of us beautifying our spaces and cleaning up.

You have raked up your pine needles. Wisely, you left a light layer of organic material all around to prevent erosion of your topsoil (Keep our lake clean!), hold moisture, and foster your small patch of nature. But you were especially careful to clean needles away from your structures because... *What if a wildfire ember landed there at the base of your foundation?*



Then you had a choice to make.

### #1 Keep your “waste” and make your own compost

We buy fertilizers, compost, mulch, and water to enrich our landscapes. But ironically, every time we harvest organic matter from our properties (i.e grass clippings), we give away the micronutrients, nitrogen and moisture that our plants need. Then we will spend money to replace them. You can keep that value in your yard by making your own compost, or leaving grass clippings in

place. Your yard is an ecosystem, and instead of throwing away those essential nutrients, you recycle them like nature does.

### #2 Give away that “waste” so *someone else* benefits from it.

All summer, starting at 7AM on your regular pick-up day, South Tahoe Refuse trucks patrol your neighborhood looking for green “waste”. STR hauls it to Full Circle Compost or Bently Ranch Farm. Those businesses, with the help of trillions of micro-organisms, reduce your larger plant materials to tiny ones—compost—and then sell it back to us! At other times, your yard waste is used in erosion control projects.



**Please help STR's Green Waste system function efficiently:**

1. No plastic bags.\* There are many excellent options such as a heavy duty paper lawn/leaf bags, trash cans, or reusable trash bags (pop-up or foldable).
2. Signal to drivers that it is green waste. Set it apart from the rest of your garbage on the opposite side of your driveway.
3. Know your limits. California customers are unlimited but Nevada customers, on the "per-can" service, are limited to the same weekly number of cans regardless of what is in the can.
4. Set out only unwanted plant materials. Pinecones, leaves, grass clippings, branches and needles will all decompose into compost.
5. Bundle together branches under 5' long (and please be kind--up to 30lbs) with natural fibers like cotton or hemp. Do not use materials that will pollute the compost like plastic or metal.
6. Some materials are "natural" but cause problems for the system.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vg1QzYwE8EA&feature=youtu.be>
  - a. No stumps. They are too big to compost efficiently.
  - b. No pollution i.e. litter, milled wood containing chemicals, etc.
  - c. No rock, dirt, or concrete. That never was living plant material and will not reduce to compost in a million trillion years!



Or, if you have a lot of yard waste at once, haul your un-bagged materials to

**South Tahoe Refuse (2121 Eloise Ave- South Lake Tahoe) on one of their free, Clean Green Waste Dump Days on June 27, September 5, October 10 from 8 AM- 4 PM.**

<https://www.southtahoerefuse.com/>

So when you look at your piles of "yard waste," you can see that it is not waste at all, but a valuable resource we can help conserve.

\*Plastic garbage bags cause many problems for STR as well as our earth. They pollute:

1. They often tear into smaller bits which then pollute the finished compost
2. They are not recycled. They are burnt, landfilled, dumped, or hauled to third world countries—just like grocery bags or lawn bags.

***Stay tuned for the second part of this article, for a fuller explanation.***