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SPECIAL SPRING LEAF COLLECTION BEGINS MARCH 15

City schedules one-time pickup because of fall freeze

The City of Missoula will conduct a special spring leaf collection during the coming four weeks because of the delayed leaf drop caused by last fall's early freeze.

Here's the schedule:

March 15-19: Area 1

March 22-26: Area 2, excluding Special Districts #2 and #3

March 29-April 2: Area 3

April 5-9: Area 4, pile pickup requests only. Call 552-6360 for pickup.

See the leaf map at <http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentView.aspx?DID=3294> if you are unsure of your area number. Please rake your yard leaves to the parking lane or shoulder for pickup, but do not block bike lanes or traffic lanes. Remember not to include debris, trash, branches or other yard waste. There will be no vehicle towing in the regular zones. Please assist with pickup by parking vehicles away from leaf piles.

The City of Missoula normally picks up leaves only in the fall. The leaves are sent to EKO Compost for local recycling. This special leaf pickup will overlap with the regular spring street sweeping schedule. Sweeping will begin March 29. The increased activity on Missoula streets may be confusing; the two activities – sweeping and picking up leaves – require different equipment.

In the Special Districts, leaves will be picked up during scheduled sweeping in April. Vehicles must be towed to clean the streets in these districts adequately, and the moving of cars will also allow leaf collection.

Last October's deep freeze caught many Missoula trees with their leaves still green. The unusual cold killed the leaves, but the trees had not yet produced the hormones necessary for leaves to fall. Spring winds have caused leaves to begin to fall.

"It's still a bit early to accurately determine what the effects of the freeze may be," said Ben Carson, the City of Missoula's urban forester. "As this year's leaf buds continue to swell and eventually break, we will likely see a large number of leaves from last year come down."

An early freeze that causes leaves to die but not drop does have the potential to adversely affect tree health, Carson said. Isolating the effects of the freeze may be difficult, as many Missoula trees affected were also showing signs of stress caused by other factors, such as prolonged drought and over-maturity.

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