Stormwater Tip:
How Fall Outdoor Cleanup Affects Stormwater Quality

- A USGS study found that thorough fall leaf removal reduced phosphorus loads by over 80% and nitrogen loads by over 70% compared to no removal, especially when done before rain events. This shows that cleanup practices directly influence nutrient loading in waterways.
- Positive effects of proper cleanup
- If done correctly, fall outdoor cleanup can improve stormwater quality by:
- Keeping leaves off streets and drains to prevent blockages and nutrient runoff
- Mulching or composting yard waste on-site to return nutrients to the lawn instead of sending them into stormwater
- Using curbside leaf collection programs to remove debris before it reaches drainage systems
- Avoiding fertilizer application before rain to prevent nutrient wash-off