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Leave the leaves – bugs are sleeping!

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Fall has arrived! The beautiful foliage that we love to admire this time of year will soon become the yearly chore of managing fallen leaves. You have likely heard the adage “leave the leaves” many times by now. This practice is gaining traction along with many other pollinator-friendly landscape management tactics, such as saving dead stems or “No Mow May”. Many benefits come from leaving fallen leaves in place, including improved soil health and protection for overwintering insects like pollinators and fireflies. But what does the research actually say about leaving the leaves? Does it work, and can it make a difference?

The short answer is: yes!



In the United States, yards are estimated to cover approximately 2.3 million km² across urban, suburban, and rural residential lands (Lerman et al. 2023). To put this in perspective, there is approximately 1.2 million km² of protected land in the US (UNEP-WCMC 2025). That means yards occupy almost double the

amount of land as protected parks and preserves in the US! While a suburban landscape may not be able to offer all the same ecosystem services as a state forest, there is still enormous potential for residential areas to make meaningful contributions to biodiversity conservation efforts.

Back to the leaves – what difference does a yard make to the insect community? Research from Ferlauto and Burghardt (2025) in Maryland found that leaf removal was detrimental to many groups of arthropods, including Coleoptera (beetles), Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths), and spiders. Removal of leaf litter resulted in a 45% reduction in Lepidoptera spring emergence and a 40% decline in species richness compared to yards where leaves were left in place. Removing leaves also reduced spider abundance by 67% and beetle abundance by 24%.

Retaining fallen leaves is beneficial to arthropod diversity and richness, and the research backs this up. However, protecting turf is a priority for many homeowners and landscapers. Heavy leaf fall which completely covers the ground will smother the turf, so removing leaves is necessary in these situations. Consider preserving some of the leaf fall as mulch around trees and landscape plants, or keep only a sparse coverage of leaves on the ground. Even a small amount of leaf retention will make a difference to the sleeping arthropods.

References

Ferlauto and Burghardt (2025). Removing autumn leaves in residential yards reduces the spring emergence of overwintering insects. *Science of The Total Environment*, 970: 178821. doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2025.178821

Lerman et al. (2023). Humanity for Habitat: Residential Yards as an Opportunity for Biodiversity Conservation. *BioScience*, 73:9, 671–689. doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biad085

UNEP-WCMC (2025). Protected Area Profile for United States of America from the World Database on Protected Areas, October 2025. Available at: protectedplanet.net



TARGETED GRAZING DEMONSTRATION: UTILIZING GOATS

Prairie hills farm is hosting a field day with SARE
North Central Sustainable Agriculture
Research and Education



GRAZING FIELD DAY

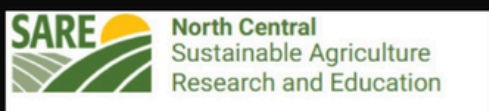
Location: The Oakwood Farm
Retreat Center

3801 S. County Road 575 E. Selma
Indiana 47383

Date: November 4th 2025

Time: 1pm - 3pm

SARE Project: Is Goat brush clearing /
target grazing a Viable business for
small scale farmers in Central Indiana?



317-833-4272

www.prairiehillsfarms.com

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UPCOMING PARP CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES

December 9th: 8:30 am to 12:00 pm

- Randolph County PARP

December 9th: 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm

- Wayne County PARP

December 16th: 6:45 pm to 9:15 pm

- Wells County PARP

December 16th: 6:45 pm to 9:15 pm

- Blackford County PARP

December 17th: 9:30 am to 11:45 am

- Rush County PARP

December 17th: 4:30 pm to 6:45 pm

- Union County PARP

February 17th: 9:00 am to 11:30 am

- Blackford County PARP

How many PARP points do you have?

1st Go to oisc.purdue.edu

2nd Click on "My Records" – gold bar across the top

3rd Click on "Applicator Login" – down the left side at the bottom.

4th You will be prompted to enter your first & last name and the last four digits of your social security number. You will be taken to a page with all of your information concerning your license.

*Reminder: every five years you need to earn three points. Once you have your three credits and prior to your license expiring you must reapply by sending in the appropriate form and \$20 to activate your license.

Events with the opportunity to obtain continuing credit hours

PARP

1. Search "PARP events Purdue University".
2. Select "View all approved PARP events".
3. To find events closer to our area, scroll down to "view events by district" and select that option.
4. Select "East district".
5. Select "View approved East district PARP events"



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