

An Article about Autumn Leaves

By Linda Gilkeson

In both of those cases the fallen leaves are just fine to use as mulch or in compost. The pear trellis rust is no longer on the leaves now—just the spore structures are left. I am not sure what the leaf galls are on the maple, but likely one of the eriophyiid mites that makes the blistered up places on the leaves. They are specific to maple, so wouldn't get on other plants, but by this time of year the mites wouldn't be on the leaves anyway (most overwinter in crevices in bark or under bud scales). When big-leaf maple leaves drop and the pigments are removed, we can see tar spot on lots of those leaves—but again, even though the black spots look bad, they don't really harm the maples and wouldn't spread to other plants.

In all of the above raking up the leaves isn't going to contribute to preventing infestation/infections next year so not to worry about picking up every leaf! The only leaf diseases that overwinter on dead leaves are apple scab and black spot of rose. In those cases, it is a good prevention to ensure the fall leaves are composted enough that they will have decomposed by spring.