

# Seattle Post-Intelligencer

[http://www.seattlepi.com/nwgardens/334163\\_basics06.html](http://www.seattlepi.com/nwgardens/334163_basics06.html)

## Garden Basics: Leaf skeletons

*Last updated October 5, 2007 3:28 p.m. PT*

By MARTY WINGATE  
SPECIAL TO THE P-I

The leaves that fall onto our sidewalks, driveways and lawns will, if left alone, decay at their own pace. You've probably picked up a leaf from a maple or an oak several months after it has fallen and seen what's left: a leaf skeleton.

The skeleton that remains shows the vascular pathway -- the conduit for water to move from roots to leaf and sugars to move from chloroplasts down to roots.

The chloroplasts are gone now; they were in the tissue between all the veins. Having done their job, they break down before the leaves fall. The veins, which are made from tougher stuff, take longer to break down.

© 1998-2009 *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*