

WHERE DID THE LEAVES GO?

Behind the scenes at the UW Facilities Services' compost yard

Collecting Leaves and Coffee



MAPLE

Acer macrophyllum
(big leaf maple)
Acer circinatum
(vine maple)
Acer saccharum
(sugar maple)

OAK

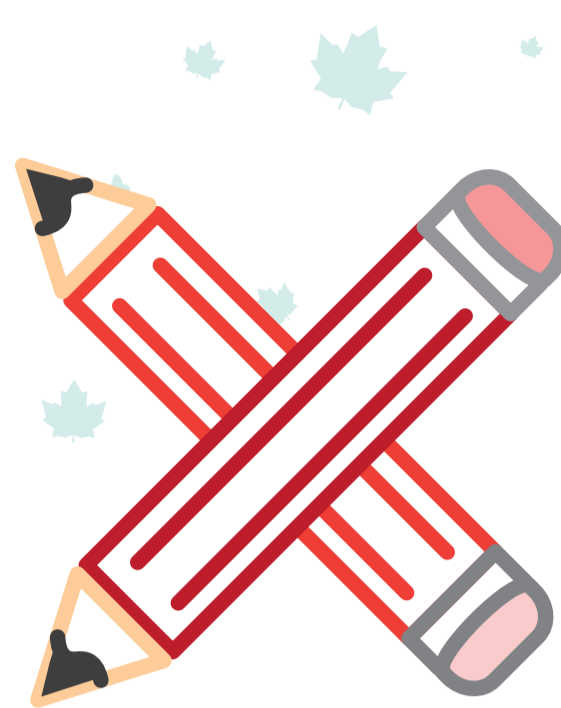
Quercus rubra
(N. red oak)
Quercus palustris
(pin oak)
Quercus coccinea
(scarlet oak)



HUSKY GRIND



UWMC PLAZA CAFE



PARNASSUS CAFE



DISTRICT MARKET

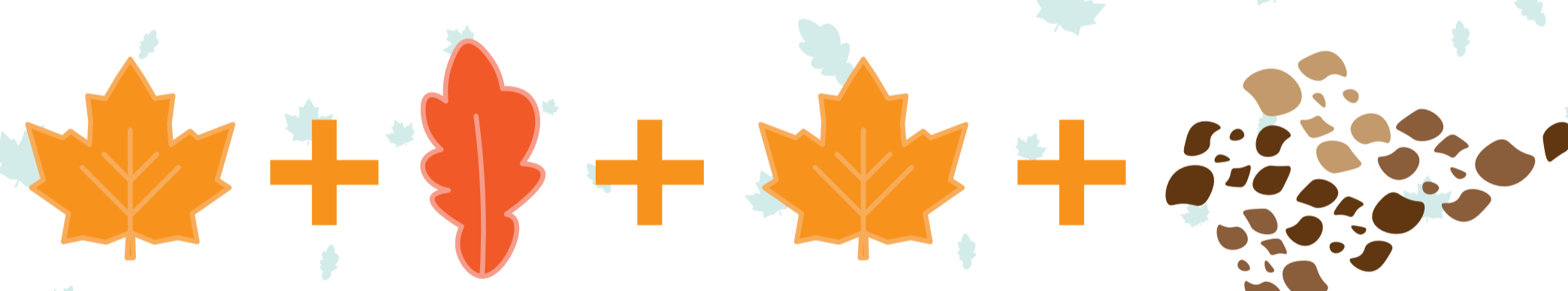


COFFEE GROUNDS COLLECTION

Throughout the year, coffee grounds are collected for the compost yard to stock up for autumn, rounded up from various Housing and Food Services locations across campus. When deciduous leaves begin to fall, the grounds are mixed in with maple, oak, and other types of leaves to fuel the breakdown process. Each month, approximately 7,920 pounds of coffee grounds are collected by UW Recycling from various locations across campus.



THE COMPOST YARD



It's not as easy as mixing up the leaves and waiting. In order to assist decomposition, supplementary nitrogen is needed to facilitate protein production for bacteria. Coffee grounds are used to facilitate the process. The coffee grounds have a carbon to nitrogen ratio of 20:1, and leaves have a C:N ratio of 60:1. In order to successfully produce compost, for every 1 pound of coffee, the compost yard needs 3 pounds of leaves.



THE LIFE CYCLE

As the compost heap begins to warm, bacteria begins to use carbon as a source of energy, and nitrogen to build protein in their bodies. Measurements of the leaves are taken three times a day over the course of a week. Internal measurements usually range anywhere between 120 to 150 degrees Fahrenheit. The entire decomposition process takes approximately 6 months, producing up to 200 yards of compost per year.



DISTRIBUTION

The final compost product is spread throughout campus rose gardens, flower beds, and at the UW Farm. In the 2014-2015 leaf season, 125 cubic yards of product was produced. Campus flora continues looking healthy because of the compost product and Grounds Management's excellent staff.