

My name is Thomas Mueller. I live at 10064 Hardy Drive in Overland Park, Kansas. This is a well kept neighborhood in central Overland Park. One of the attractions of the neighborhood is the mature oak trees – many of them. The pictures below show the 'sky line'. As the captions show, the pictures weren't carefully selected: They are simply the first 3 views I came to from my home. You see the same view anywhere from my home north or east to the county state line respectively. I suspect my problems, described below, are many people's problems.

I have a corner home with 6 fully grown pin oaks. I also have what I believe is known as a sweet gum – the tree which deposits untold numbers of the prickly little balls. There is also a tree on the border between my lot and the neighbor's – I don't know the name of it – with very large leaves. This year I had 120 of the 39 gallon bags of leaves – generally well packed. And there are probably 15 more bags on the ground which I didn't even rake up because I already had more bags than I could get rid of at 10 bags per week, which is the rate they'd been picking up before the first of the year.

That many leaves cannot be composted on my property - there isn't that much space. They can't be burned. They can't be hauled to some site they may designate (I don't know if they've done that, but there was talk of it) because they come out over several months, making renting a truck impractical, and any such site would be a healthy drive from central Overland Park. Even packing my minivan to unsafe vision levels, it would be trip after trip after trip.

If I could afford to, I would have 4 of those pin oaks cut down. Sadly, I can't afford to do that yet. Though when I get my last child through college, it remains a probability. That's one unintended consequence this rule begets. But if the rule holds, there are other unintended consequences: I'll make a reasonable compost pile, mow what mows, and let the mown and unmown leaves blow. As you can see from the pictures, a lot of people will be in that position – there are simply too many trees. I'll stop fertilizing because with so much leaf mulch working into the grass, any extra (mulched) grass in the soil will not be absorbed; besides, with the degree of leaf cover, I don't expect fertilization will help salvage the lawn. That's bad for all of our property values. That's possibly a fire hazard for our neighborhood. I would not be surprised if it is a health hazard since matted wet leaves have to have the potential to harbor more germs, bacteria, and mold - though that is purely speculation.

I have to wonder though if it wasn't the land fill people pushing the buttons on this rule. They got a terrific wind fall. They literally halved their pickup service to me. I don't average more than about 2 bags per week of other waste, that's 100 bags per year of household waste, so the total was over 200 bags. And this year they'll only have the 100 or so. That's half. And they didn't lower their rates one penny.

And finally – what really frustrates me – is that it isn't really about the earth. Land fills can and have been turned into positive land uses. Land fills are far less problematic than, for example, all of our travel – activity which creates pollutants which can't be turned

into positive uses. If the health of the earth were truly at stake, we'd be working on the issues which are more important.

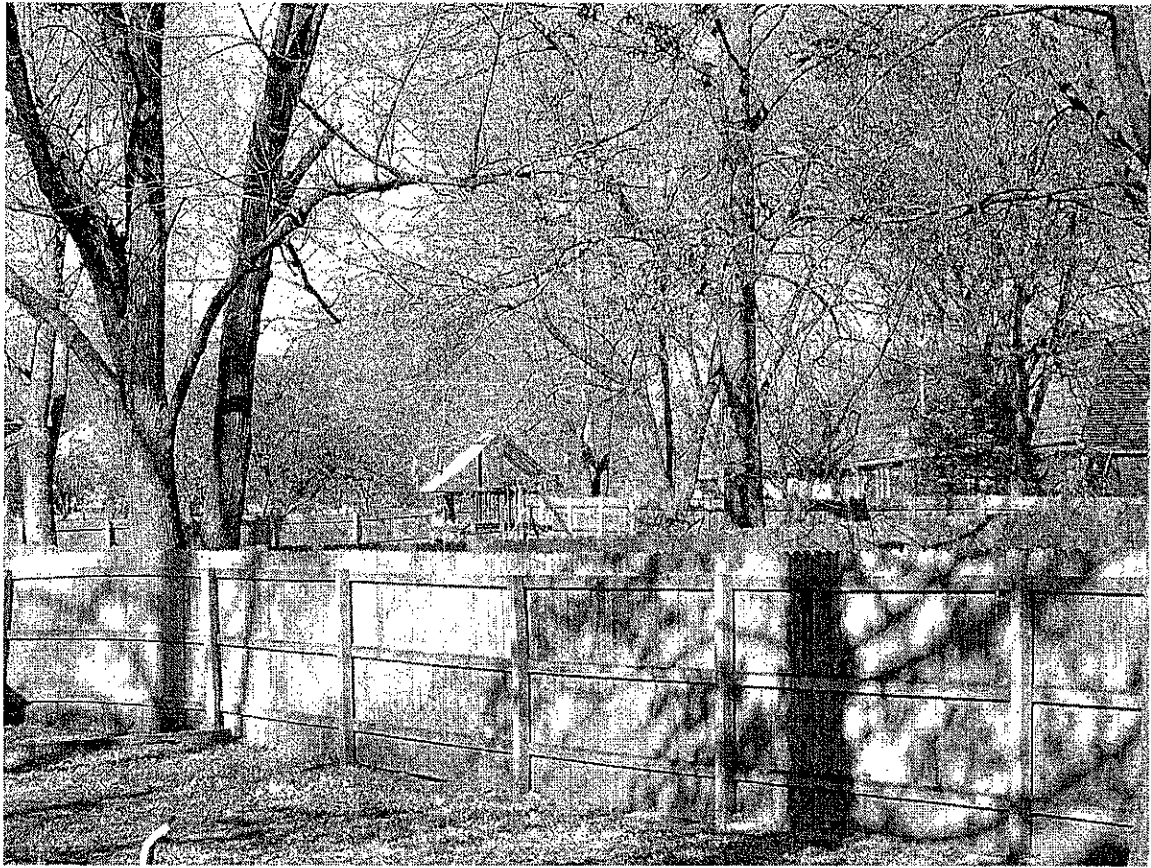
What this is about is people - who some would call zealots - with a pet cause. I do not begrudge people having a pet cause. I respect their right to champion a cause to the people. I do not respect those who, unable to sell an untenable position to the public, seek a deal with sympathetic ear in government. I can respect even less the ear in government that acts outside of their traditional authority because they are personally moved. That's a big step down the slippery slope of government *to* the people. I hope the state legislature is able to step in to undo this unfortunate rule.

In addition, I have to admit that I don't even know the name of my county commissioner. But I can assure you that by the time the next election comes along, I'll know and I'll be voting my county commissioner out. He or she clearly is not in touch with the constituents - or their job descriptions - at least not with the constituents in my leafy neighborhood who want it to be both a leafy neighborhood and a pretty, safe neighborhood.

Respectfully submitted,

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From my back stoop looking NW through the neighborhood



From in front of my house looking N through the neighborhood



From in front of my house looking W through the neighborhood