

## Planting a Fire Wise Landscape

“Where People Who Love to Garden, Love to Shop”

Getting back-to-nature, seeking solitude, escaping the rat race are all good reasons to live near the forest. Locally we call this the urban-wildland interface. With the woodland lifestyle comes risk. One of the primary hazards is the danger of wildfire. You can have a beautiful landscape and be firewise with a little cleanup and planting firewise plants.



**Defensible Space** - The top priority outdoors is creating a dependable space. This area serves as a buffer zone as a fire approaches your home. The goal is to keep a fire moving slow and low until it can be extinguished. Some plants are more flammable than others and if we thin these varieties closest to the house it keeps fire close to the ground and moving slow.

Evergreen conifers are high in combustible resins and waxes that make them evergreen and durable, except in the case of fire. Close to the house you should reduce the number of juniper, pine, spruce, and cedars, each is high in plant resins and burn easily. Replace them with deciduous plants, or those that lose their leaves in winter. Deciduous plants not only hold more water in their foliage, which make them more difficult to burn, but they drop their foliage during the winter

months and reduce combustible materials in the landscape if leaves are picked up in winter.

Think camping for a moment. Throw a freshly picked pine branch on the campfire and it ignites easily with a whole lot of smoke. Throw a leafy oak branch, ash or cottonwood on the same camp fire and it is likely to smolder and wither, and finally catches the blaze only after the hydrating life has been sucked from its limbs. These are the branches that never finished burning and still there the next morning.

**Characteristics of a firewise plant are five fold:**

1. **Supple leaves**
2. **Water like sap**
3. **Thicker bark**
4. **High moisture content**
5. **Low resin content**

Water and feed the landscape to keep healthy. Water your existing natives once per month in summer until the monsoons arrive. Ornamental landscape plants appreciate a deep soak once per week. A layer of composted mulch helps suppress weeds and holds moisture in around healthy plants, especially helpful in summer.

**Avoid ladder fuels.** This is where tall weed ignites a taller shrub that catches the pine trees on fire, then jumps to the



roof. Remember, our goal with a firewise landscape is to keep a fire on the ground, out of the canopies and off the roof. Ideally, design garden islands in the yard with an interesting plant mix separated from the next garden island by a driveway, patio or rock lawn. This firewise technique allows firefighters some space between gardens to fight the flames.

Clean debris from gutters and roof. Needles and leaves on the roof and gutters provide tinder for blowing sparks. Chip piles of brush and use as a compost or remove it for disposal.

Firewise Plants are those that catch fire slowly and when they do burn, they ignite with less intensity and burn cooler. Most perennial flowers that go dormant and underground in winter are considered firewise. Focus most of your resources on the trees and shrubs. These are the plants that provide the most burnable material in the landscape. We defiantly want these plants to be firewise, especially within the first 30 feet to the home.

Here is the preferred list of firewise trees, shrubs, and vines:

### Trees

- Aspen Tree
- Alder
- Apple
- Ash
- Beech
- Birch
- Catalpa
- Cherry
- Cottonwood
- Crabapple
- Desert Willow

**More Suggestions on next page . . . . .**



# Garden Talk

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Dogwood  
Elm  
Ginkgo  
Hackberry  
Hickory  
Maple  
Mesquite  
Mimosa  
Mulberry  
Red & Pin Oak  
Peach  
Pecan  
Persimmon  
Pistachio  
Plum  
Poplar  
Redbud  
Russian olive  
Sweetgum  
Sycamore  
Tulip tree  
Walnut  
Willow  
Witchhazel

### Shrubs

Agave  
autumn Sage  
Artemesia  
Barberry  
Beauty Berry  
Bottlebrush  
Burning bush  
Butterfly bush  
Ceanothus  
Century plant  
Crape Myrtle  
Current  
Euonymus  
Forsythia  
Gooseberry

Hawthorn  
Hibiscus  
Horsetail  
Hydrangea  
Jasmine  
Laurels  
Lilac  
Mahonia  
Mallows  
Mockorange  
Nandina  
Ocotillo  
Oleander  
Oregon Grape  
Pyracantha  
Redtwig dogwood  
Roses  
Rose of Sharon  
Rhododendron  
Sandcherry  
Salvia  
Silver mound  
Smokebush  
Snowberry  
Spirea  
Strawberry Bush  
Sumac  
Viburnum  
Vitiate  
Weigela  
Yucca

### Grasses

Blue Fescue  
Bluegrass  
Buffalo  
Horsetail  
Burmuda  
Rye Grass

### Vine & Ground Cover

Ajuga  
Cotoneaster  
Clematis  
Creeping Oregon Grape  
Crossvine  
Honeysuckle  
Ice Plant & Succulents  
Ivy  
Kinnikinnick  
Lantana  
Passion Vine  
Periwinkle  
Potato Vine  
Star Jasmine  
Strawberry  
Trumpet Vine  
Virginia Creeper  
Wintercreeper



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