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FIREWISE LANDSCAPING 101

Develop and Maintain a Firewise Landscape Around Your Home to reduce the amount of fuel available to any fire approaching your property.

- Fire travels on a path! It needs heat, fuel and oxygen.
- You may not be able to eliminate the threat of wildfire, but you can take steps to protect your home.
- Firewise landscapes do not have to be stark and boring.
- To protect your home, create three zones of defensible space.
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Create Defensible Space – Start Close to Home!

Zone 1: Within 30 Feet of Your Home

On a steep slope, increase this distance to 100 feet on the downhill side.

- Create a three-foot nonflammable barrier around your home, such as a rock & herb gardens or flower beds.
- Remove trees and branches within 10 feet of a structure, deck or roof.
- Remove or transplant coniferous trees and shrubs within 30 feet of a structure.
- Plant ground covers and low-growing, herbaceous perennials, which retain more moisture than grass. Use only plants less than 18 inches tall near structures.
- Keep vegetation well watered, pruned and mowed.
- Coniferous trees may be located on the **outer** edges of Zone 1 if crowns are at least 20 feet apart at maturity. Remove lower branches on mature trees.
- Use stone, gravel, concrete, and other non-combustible materials for walkways, driveways, borders, and other landscape features to create fire breaks. Disconnect wooden walkways, fencing, and wood mulch from the structure.
- Roofs and gutters collect leaves, needles, and other woody debris. These areas must be cleared several times during the spring, summer, and fall. Burning embers carried to these areas can easily ignite the fine, dry fuels that collect in them.
- Southcentral Alaska has an abundance of Bluejoint reedgrass (*Calamagrostis canadensis*). This tall native grass dies back in the fall and cures over the winter making it a dry, volatile fire hazard in the spring before green-up. Cutting and raking this grass is imperative to stop fire spread to your home.

Zone 2: from 30 to 100 feet beyond your home

- Use more deciduous trees and shrubs and a few widely spaced conifers.
- Remove tree branches within eight feet of the ground; thin trees so that crowns remain 15 feet apart at maturity.
- Separate shrubs by a distance of two or three times their height.
- Use flower gardens and nonflammable features, such as rock, to break up areas of vegetation.
- Stack all wood piles at least 30 feet from any structure; clear away any flammable vegetation. Many homes have survived as a fire moved past, only to burn later from a woodpile that ignited after the firefighters moved on to protect other homes.
- Label and locate liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) or propane tanks or any fuel storage containers at least 30 feet from a structure. Use stone or iron instead of wood for cribs under tanks. Clear away flammable vegetation.
- All-terrain vehicles, snow machines, and other machinery should be parked at least 30 feet from your home.
- Work together with your neighbors to clear brush & prune trees in common areas between houses.
- Electrical power lines should be clear of vegetation. Avoid planting trees near lines where they may grow into and contact the lines under windy conditions, which could cause a fire.

Zone 3: 100 feet or more beyond your home

- Retain deciduous trees and shrubs and thin areas of dense shrubs.
- Thin spruce trees and remove lower branches to decrease the fire hazard.
- Mow tall grass & rake up residue.
- Remove dead and diseased trees to improve growing conditions for the residual trees.

Maintenance

- Maintaining your Firewise landscape is essential. You should irrigate to maintain moisture in the vegetation during dry periods. Visit www.muni.org/fire for more information about creating and maintaining a defensible space, fire resistant plants and landscaping.