

# FIREWISE LANDSCAPE DESIGN 101

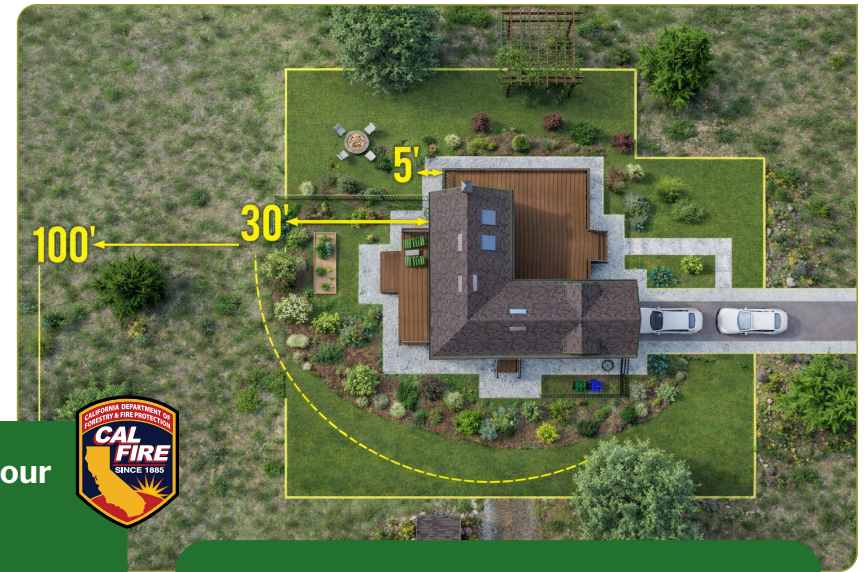
All plants can burn, but choosing drought tolerant plants and caring for them properly can make your garden more resistant to wildfires. This quick guide will cover how to pick and maintain plants to protect your home.

- ▶ Consistently remove any dried plant material on your property to minimize fuel load.
- ▶ Do not overplant or plant dense shrubbery in large groupings.
- ▶ Incorporate fire breaks of non-flammable hardscaping, such as driveways, patios, inorganic mulches or water features in your landscape design.
- ▶ Break your property into concentric rings or zones of planting, with the most firewise plants closest to your home, gradually giving way to drought tolerant naturalized species.
- ▶ Use drip irrigation to make sure your plants remain hydrated during the fire season.



## BREAKING YOUR PROPERTY INTO ZONES

Choosing the right location for your plants is key to enhancing your home's defense against wildfires.



### ZONE 0 | The first five feet from your home is the most important.

Don't let plants have direct contact with your homes siding, windows, eaves, vents, or decks to minimize fire risks. In this 0-5 feet zone keep this area next to structures clear of combustible plants and materials to prevent ember ignition and direct flame contact. (Note: Wood mulch can be a fuel source and should not be used within five feet of the home.)

### ZONE 1 | KEEP IT LEAN, CLEAN AND GREEN WITHIN 30 FEET

A 30-foot diameter around your home should be landscaped with only plants that are low growing, herbaceous, and consistently irrigated. When planning, be sure to allow each plant enough room to reach its full size at maturity and regularly clear dead or dry vegetation and create space between trees. During times of drought when watering is limited, pay special attention to clearing dead or dying material.

#### What to do:

1. Avoid planting evergreens in this area.
2. Remove all dead plants, grass, and weeds.
3. Remove dead or dry leaves and pine needles.
4. Trim trees regularly to keep branches a minimum of 10 feet from other trees.
5. Set up your irrigation system in advance, and mulch all plants thoroughly to keep them well hydrated.

### ZONE 2 | REDUCE POTENTIAL FUEL WITHIN 100 FEET

The area extending up to 100 feet from your home is an ideal location for grasses, lawn, rock and low-growing shrubs. Plant in small groupings with hardscaping in between to act as fuel breaks. If you choose to plant evergreen shrubs or trees, situate them between 30-100 feet from your home.

If your property merges with the natural chaparral woodland area, be sure to thin any existing shrubbery on the fringes of your property. If you choose to landscape this area, select native species which can easily adapt to our climate.

#### What to do:

1. **Cut or mow annual grass** down to a maximum height of four inches.
2. **Create vertical and horizontal space** between shrubs and trees.
3. **Remove fallen leaves, needles, twigs, bark, cones, and small branches.**
4. **Keep 10 feet of clearance around exposed wood piles, down to bare mineral soil, in all directions.**
5. Clear areas around outbuildings and propane tanks. Keep 10 feet of clearance to bare mineral soil and no flammable vegetation for an additional 10 feet around their exterior.

## WHAT MAKES A PLANT FIREWISE?

Not all 'fire-safe' plants are created equal. Even though some plants are labeled as 'fire-safe' or 'fire-resistant', their actual risk of burning can vary greatly depending on care and environmental conditions.

**Environment matters:** A plant's surroundings and how it's cared for play a big role in its flammability.

**TIP:** Maintain vertical and horizontal spacing by planting smart, trimming lower limbs, and removing dead material. Aim for at least 6 feet of vertical clearance between the ground and tree branches, or three times the height of any shrubs below.

**Watering makes a difference:** Well-watered plants are less flammable because their higher moisture content acts like a natural fire retardant, making them harder to ignite and sustain a flame.

**TIP:** Water your plants deeply and regularly to help them retain moisture focusing on plants within the first 30 feet of your home.

**Growth changes fire resistance:** Even plants that start out low-risk can become woody, overgrown, or accumulate dead material as they mature—making them more flammable than they once were.

**TIP:** Reassess your landscaping each year. Prune older plants regularly, remove dead growth, and replace overly woody plants to maintain a fire-safe yard.

## WHAT IS NOT A FIREWISE PLANT?

**Junipers**, other conifers and broadleaf evergreens contain oils, resins and waxes that make them more flammable. They can still be incorporated into your firewise design, just be sure to situate them away from the home and plant them where they can reach their full size at maturity without being overcrowded.

## FIREWISE PLANT LIST

### TREES\*

- Maples (Acer spp.)
- Flowering Dogwood (Cornus florida)
- Cherry (Prunus spp.)
- Oak (Quercus spp.)
- Citrus
- Chinese Pistache
- Redbud

### SHRUBS

- Butterfly bush (Buddleja spp.)
- Cotoneaster
- Oregon Grape (Mahonia spp.)
- Buckthorn (Rhamnus spp.)
- Azaleas & Rhododendrons
- Yucca
- Pineapple Guava
- Euonymus Fortunei

### PERENNIALS

- Yarrow (Achillea spp.)
- Pigsqueak (Bergenia crassifolia)
- Coreopsis
- Wallflower (Erysimum spp.)
- CA Poppy
- Geranium
- Daylily (Hemerocallis spp.)
- Coral Bells (Heuchera spp.)
- Iris
- Mexican Evening Primrose
- Red Hot Poker (Kniphofia uvaria)
- Penstemon
- Flowering Bulbs
- Black-Eyed Susan (Rudbeckia)
- Coneflower (Echinacea p.)
- Dianthus
- Dead Nettle (Lamium)

### GROUNDCOVERS AND SHRUBS

#### SUCCULENT

- Ice Plant (Delosperma spp.)
- Hens & Chicks (Sempervivum spp.)
- Stonecrop (Sedum spp.)

#### NON-SUCCULENT

- Bugleweed (Ajuga reptans)
- Manzanita (Arctostaphylos spp.)
- Snow-in-Summer (Cerastium tomentosum)
- Wintercreeper (Euonymus fortunei)
- Thyme (Thymus spp.)
- Verbena
- Catmint (Nepeta spp.)
- Vinca Minor
- Lilyturf
- Lantana
- Myoporum
- Lamb's Ear (Stachys byzantina)



# FIREWISE LANDSCAPING

Firewise landscaping is primarily about surrounding your home with the least flammable plant choices possible, not overplanting, and keeping up with yard maintenance to prevent the build-up of flammable debris. Every plant is flammable, but some are more resistant than others.

