

Firewise Landscaping for Woodland Homes



Firesafe in the Interface

THE FIRESCAPE

A home in a woodland setting is a home surrounded by a forest fire fuel, and in real danger if a wildfire is on the loose.

FIRE-WISE LANDSCAPING can create a LINE OF DEFENSE against the threat of wildfire by creating a safety zone or defensible space around the home.

The goal is to BREAK THE CHAIN of flammable fuel between the home and the forest. Examine the yard. What can catch fire and carry it to the house?

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH THIS PIECE OF LAND?

You can landscape for fire protection while maintaining a natural look to your surroundings. Work with the plants native to the site, using the patterns found in nature. Also, consider the hardiness zones and planting sites when choosing new plants. Where plants and trees are placed in your yard is just as important as the species when planning fire safety.

ALL PLANTS BURN!

There are no fire proof plants, but some plants are more fire-retardant than others. Use these considerations when choosing plants and trees for your yard.

Choose plants and trees with:

- . A high moisture content in the leaves (leaves that stay moist)
- . A low oil or resin content (avoid pines).
- . Minimal litter and accumulating debris.
- . Limited foliage, and few dead branches.
- . A lower overall height.
- . An open, loose branching habit.
- . Easy maintenance and pruning.
- . Drought resistance:

Woodland Home Zones

ZONE 1: 5 FEET FROM THE HOUSE

This area, closest to the house, is the most critical for fire protection. Have nothing flammable next to the house, including tall grass, evergreen trees and shrubs, trees overhanging the house or deck, leaves, brush, firewood piles, bark, mulch and other burnables. Also, clean gutters, roof and deck of flammable debris. This area does not have to be barren. Maintain a well kept lawn, or use crushed brick or river stone gravel instead of mulch. Use raised beds, large decorative rocks, stone walkways; patios, or other features to create visual interest while maintaining a fuel break for forest fire safety.

ZONE 2: 10 FEET FROM THE HOUSE

Maintain a well-kept lawn and avoid evergreens that catch fire easily and burn quickly. Occasional trees and shrubs should be at least 10 feet from the house. Space trees with 10-15 feet between tree crowns and prune trees 10-15 feet up from the ground.

A swimming pool can act as both a firebreak and an emergency water supply for firefighters. Freshly tilled flower beds, herb or vegetable gardens, rock gardens, stone walls and driveways can also act as firebreaks. Also, avoid "fire ladders" where fire can climb from the ground into tree branches. Do this by pruning trees, spacing tall trees away from medium-sized trees and by using groundcovers or small plants under tall trees.

ZONE 3: 30-100 FEET FROM THE HOUSE

Rake or use a leaf blower to remove leaves and twigs at least 30 feet from the house up to 100 feet on the downhill side. If you live in a pine forest, maintain a safety zone at least 75 feet on all sides of the house. Firewood and other burnables should be stored at least 30 feet from the house. This will also help keep fire from spreading to or from your house. It also provides a space for firefighters to defend your house from fire.

Prune and thin trees so there are no dense stands or tree tops touching. Shrubs should be well maintained, kept free of dead material and kept small. Control brush and Weeds annually. Steep areas can be terraced to slow down wildfires. A stone wall can also act as a fire barrier on very steep slopes.

THE HOUSE:

Build your house on a level location. Houses overhanging steep slopes are very vulnerable to forest fires. Enclose decks. Use fire resistant building material for both the siding and the roof. Avoid wood shake roofs for woodland homes! Make sure firefighters can find and reach your home.

Landscaping for Forest Fire Protection

