

WILDLAND FIRES IN BENTON AND FRANKLIN COUNTIES

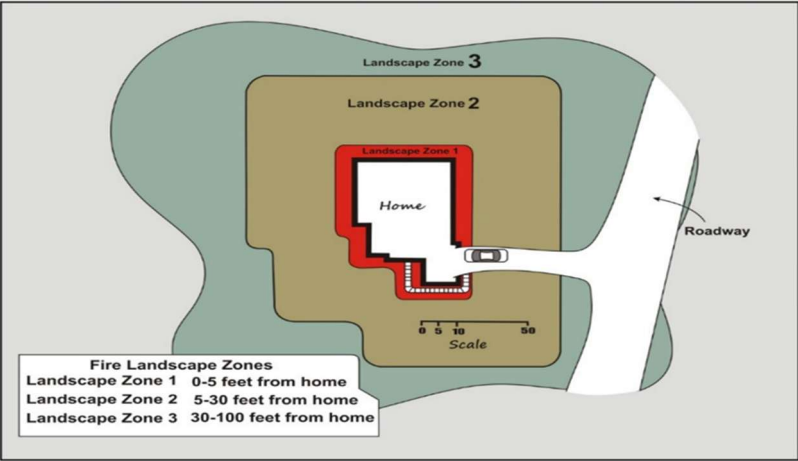
Wildland fires will always burn in Benton and Franklin Counties, but that does not mean homes have to be lost to wildland fires. To reduce fire damage in the fire-prone wildland urban interface areas, home owners can use appropriate construction materials, and select fire-resistant plants to minimize losses.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE

The most important people in preventing a structure from burning in a wildland fire is the property owner. Homeowners, not fire departments, have the responsibility to take action before a fire ever happens. Actions taken **before** the fire often determine the final outcome. Creating defensible space around a home is one of the most important and effective steps one can take to protect families, firefighters, and homes from catastrophic wildfire. Defensible space is the area between a structure and an oncoming wildfire (or between a burning structure and wildland vegetation) where nearby vegetation has been modified to reduce a wildfire’s intensity and ability to spread. Having a defensible space not only protects homes, it also helps protect those who are defending homes by providing safe ingress and egress.

LANDSCAPE ZONES

Landscape zones can be used when selecting fire-resistant vegetation in fire-prone environments.



Landscape Zone 1:

0-5 feet if the structure has one-hour flame-resistant siding OR 0-10 feet if the structure has non-flame-resistant siding. In this zone, the goal is to prevent ignitions on or near a structure.

- ▶ **Plant no trees or shrubs.**
- ▶ **Use only inorganic mulch. (Rubber mulch is not acceptable for use.)**
- ▶ **Plant fire-resistant plants with high moisture content.**

Landscape Zone 2:

5-30 feet. In this zone, the goal is to prevent any spread of a fire that may be ignited from burning embers or other ignition sources. Plant single trees that are pruned at least 10’ from the ground.

- ▶ **Plant single shrubs. Keep well groomed.**
- ▶ **Clean up dead fuels.**
- ▶ **Eliminate continuous ground fuel and ladder fuels.**

Landscape Zone 3:

30-100+ feet. In this zone, the goal is to reduce the heat generated by a fire (intensity) as it gets closer to a structure.

- ▶ **Maintain well-spaced trees with crowns well separated.**
- ▶ **Eliminate ladder fuels.**
- ▶ **Minimize ground/surface fuels.**
- ▶ **Keep shrubs pruned, thinned, and well-spaced.**

FIREBRANDS (Sparks or Embers)

Wildfire threatens homes in three ways: direct contact by flames, radiated heat, and firebrands (burning embers). **More homes burn due to firebrands than due to any other cause.** When fire conditions are right, firebrands can be lofted high into the air and transported more than a mile from the main fire. Firebrands also can be carried by wind and fire whirls. If firebrands land in easily ignitable materials such as dried grass, fallen leaves, wood shake roofs, leaf- or needle-filled gutters, a new fire can easily start.

BUILDING MATERIALS

The home design, location, construction materials, and access all influence its survivability during a wildland fire. The most exposed portion of your home is the roof. Class A roofing offers fire resistance and greatly improves the likelihood of the structure surviving a wildland fire. The use of fire-resistant building materials such as cement board siding, dual-pane windows, boxed in eaves, and metal screen (1/8” or less) covering vents reduces the probability of ignition of one’s home. Make sure decks and fencing are in good repair and free of clutter and debris. Remember, if it is attached to your house, it is part of your house! Consider the use of metal gates and other non-flammable materials to separate fences and decks from your home. Lawn furniture, decorations, and other flammable items may serve as receptor of firebrands and pose an increased risk to your home. See

www.firewise.org for additional information about building materials and construction standards.

MULCHES

Mulches used around the landscape are valuable because they conserve moisture and help reduce weed growth. Organic mulches, such as bark, are often used. However, firebrands from a wildland fire can ignite dry bark mulch, conveying the fire to a building. Consider using less- combustible types of mulch such as gravel or decorative rock, or a combination of wood bark mulch surrounded by decorative rock mulch. Do not use wood or bark mulches within 5 feet of the house. Instead, consider colored rock, rock cinders, pavers, or other non-combustible, inorganic materials.

MAINTENANCE

Maintenance is absolutely essential to a fire-resistant landscape. Plants listed as fire-resistant, if allowed to grow unchecked and poorly maintained, can become fire hazards. Practice, “If it is brown trim it down”. Proper maintenance of landscaping is crucial and cannot be ignored.

Maintenance Practices for Fire-Resistant Landscapes

The primary objective of landscape maintenance is esthetics and to reduce the spread and intensity of a threatening wildland fire.

- **Washing or removing dead debris out of plants**
- **Pruning to remove ladder fuels – vegetation that goes from the ground up into trees or shrubs.**
- **Thinning**
- **Spacing**
- **Raking**
- **Weeding**
- **Mowing/Weed Eating**
- **Using only inorganic mulch close to structures**
- **Watering**
- **Cleaning roofs and gutters**
- **Cleaning up and properly disposing of yard waste**
- **Removing dead fuels**
- **Separating shrubs horizontally so they are no closer than twice their height**
- **Separating plants vertically so the space between the top of a shrub and the lower branches of a tree are at least three times the height of the shrub**
- **Practicing “Lean, Clean and Green” maintenance at least 30 feet around the structure is essential to a fire-resistant landscape.**

FIRE-RESISTANT PLANTS

The following is a very short list of fire-resistant plants.

Fire-Resistant Plants

*Plants marked with asterisk prefer afternoon shade

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Landscape Zone</u>
<u>Ground Covers</u>		
Ice Plant	Delosperma cooperi	1,2 or 3
Creeping phlox	Phlox subulata	2 or 3
Dianthus (Pinks)	Dianthus cultivars	1,2 or 3
Hens & Chicks	Sempervivums cultivars	1,2 or 3
Vinca*	Vincan minor	1,2 or 3
<u>Vines</u>		
Trumpet Creeper	Campsis radicans	1,2 or 3
Honeysuckle	Lonicera simpervirens	1,2 or 3
Grapes	Vitis species	2 or 3
<u>Herbaceous Perennials</u>		
Daylily	Hemerocallis cultivars	1,2 or 3
Cranesbill	Geranium species	1,2 or 3
Hosta*	Hosta species & cultivars	1,2 or 3
Yucca	Yucca species & cultivars	1,2 or 3
Shasta Daisy	Leucanthemum	2 or 3
<u>Deciduous Shrubs</u>		
Lilac	Syringa species	2 or 3
Burning Bush	Euonymus alatus	2 or 3
Forsythia	Forsythia species	3
<u>Broadleaf Evergreen Shrubs</u>		
Cherry Laurel	Prunus laurocerasus	2 or 3
<u>Non-Turf Grasses</u>		
Festuca glauca	Blue fescue	2 or 3
<u>Deciduous Trees</u>		

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Landscape Zone</u>
Maples	Acer species and cultivars (Except for Acer galbrum/Rocky Mountain Maple)	3 2
Oak	Queucus species (Except for Queucus gambelii/Gambel Oak)	3 2

Unfavorable Plants

Below is a short list of some of the plants that are **NOT** recommended for use in fire-prone environments.

The plants in this category have some common characteristics:

- High surface area to volume ratio, which means, they have fine-textured parts.
- Low moisture content
- High percentage of dead fuel matter or debris
- High resin content

<u>DO NOT PLANT LIST</u>		
<u>Trees</u>	<u>Shrubs</u>	<u>Grasses</u>
Pine	Bitterbrush	Pampas Grass
Firs	Sagebrush	Cheat Grass
Larch	Mugo pine	
Spruce	Arborvitae	
Douglas fir	Juniper	
Yew	Yew	
Arborvitae		
Hemlock		
Cedar		
Juniper		

****Remember: Fire Resistant does not mean fireproof! Even fire-resistant plants will burn if not well maintained*****

A special thanks to the individuals with the WSU Master Gardeners who were so willing to share their knowledge on fire resistant landscaping. Also, a special thanks to Job's Nursery for helping to identify plants available in our vicinity.



**Fire Resistant
Landscaping for Benton
and Franklin Counties**

