



Maintain the Landscape around your home!

Defensible space is the space between a structure and the wildland area that creates a sufficient buffer to slow or halt the spread of fire to a structure. It protects the home from igniting due to direct flame or radiant heat. Defensible space is essential to help protect a structure during a wildland fire. You can create defensible space by removing weeds, brush, and other vegetation from around your property. Defensible space is made up of three zones around your home.

0-5 FEET – The “Immediate Zone.”

Your house is probably the most flammable thing on your property, and hardening it is the first priority. Once your house is hardened, you can move into the garden. The first step is to consider the area closest to your home. Further hardening the area within 5' of the home is critical to preventing flying embers from igniting vegetation adjacent to the house and potentially igniting the house. This zone around the home is a good place for walkways, or non-combustible “mulch” such as gravel or decorative rock. So if you have beloved roses, camellias or lemon trees in the 5' zone, transplant them elsewhere, or at the very least prune them thoroughly and remove adjacent plants, so there is minimal combustible material that can ignite your home.

5-30 FEET- The “Intermediate Zone.”

The next area to consider is the 5-30' zone. Plant this area in islands of lower growing vegetation up to 3' tall, with occasionally a larger shrub or tree, separated by non-combustible pathways and other open areas like patios. If a fire is advancing, the idea is to slow it and provide less fuel the closer it gets to the house, while leaving room for firefighters to maneuver equipment adjacent to the home. Imagine a rain of embers falling onto your property, if a fire ignites, will it be able to burn all the way to your home or are there breaks in the vegetation (pathways and patios) to limit the advance of fire?

30-100 FEET- The “Extended Zone.”

Farther out in the 30-100' zone, plants can be somewhat taller, still placed in islands separated by pathways of mown and well hydrated native grasses, or composted mulch or gravel to impede the spread of fire.

In all the zones, be aware of plants growing below trees, and remove any ladder fuels. The rule of thumb is that the space from the top of any plant to the lower branches of a tree should be 3 times the height of the lower plant.



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