Defensible Space

Every home requires defensible space. Defensible space is the area around the home free from dangerous accumulations of flammable pyrophytic vegetation. This allows firefighters a safe working area from which to defend against an oncoming wildfire.

A firewise landscape includes LOW pyrophytic plants, shrubs and trees (those less likely to burn and slower to ignite) strategically placed and maintained to resist the spread of fire. It also is a landscape that is maintained free of dead and dry plant materials, with living plants, shrubs and trees properly spaced and managed so they will not serve as ladder fuels during a wildfire.

Make your house one that firefighters can effectively defend. Remove weeds, brush and other pyrophytic vegetation near your home, thereby creating a more fire resistive landscape.

Defensible Space Requirements

Within 15 Feet

Remove pyrophytic plants (Junipers, Spanish Broom, etc.) within 15 feet of the structure(s).
Modify single specimen native or pyrophytic plants. Maintain shrubs free from dead branches and twigs.
Remove trees less than 6 inches in diameter within 6 to 8 feet of other larger trees.
Maximum diameter of any one shrub or group of shrubs shall be 15 feet. Spacing requirements of shrubs shall be two times the height of the shrub.
Remove tree branches within 10 feet of a chimney or stovepipe outlet.
Remove dead trees.
More than a cord of firewood less than 10 feet away from a structure shall be covered with a fire resistant fabric.
Maintain any tree, shrub, or plant adjacent to or overlapping a structure, free of dead or dying vegetation.

Within 100 feet

Remove or modify native or pyrophytic plants (Junipers, Spanish Broom, etc.) within 100 feet of the structure(s).
Maintain grasses and weeds to be 4 inches or less in height.
Remove limbs of trees less than 6 feet from the ground.
Exception: Deciduous, non-native trees, and Spruce trees that have all forest litter removed from underneath the base of the tree, the height of pruning can be reduced by 50%.
If a continuous canopy exists on properties, tree branches are to be removed within 12 to 15 feet of the ground.
Remove pine needles and leaves from the ground that have accumulated in excess of 2 inches in height.

Understanding Pyrophytic

A plant, shrub or tree with HIGH PYROPHYTIC properties means they will ignite easily and burn intensely.
Understanding the characteristics of xeriscape plants, native plants, shrubs and trees, will help determine the correct placement and proper selection of your plants. This will help to make your landscape more fire resistant and help your local firefighters protect your home during the threat of a wildfire.

Pyrophytic Characteristics

HIGH PYROPHYRITC plants, shrubs and trees ignite and burn intensely and typically share certain characteristics:

1) They are usually blade-leaf or needle-leaf evergreens
2) They have stiff, woody, small or fine, lacy leaves
3) Their leaves and wood usually contain volatile waxes, fats, terpenes or oils (crushed leaves have strong odors)
4) Their sap is usually gummy, resinous and has a strong odor
5) They usually contain plentiful fine, twiggy, dry or dead materials
6) They may have "hair" covered leaves
7) They may have loose or popery bark
8) These plants flame (not smolder) when ignited with a match

Understanding Pyrophytic

For more information on how to make your home more fire resistant, go to www.ThinLine.org
Working Together
We Can Make the Big Bear Valley A More Fire Safe, Firewise Community

Get In The Race For Defensible Space
Funding is provided through a CAL FIRE State Responsibility Area Fire Prevention Fund and your local Big Bear Fire Department.

Big Bear
Firewise
Planting Guide

(909) 866-7566
BigBearFire.org
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Big Bear Lake, CA 92315-2830
Plants in Big Bear Valley

Many xeriscape and native plants, shrubs and trees found in the Big Bear Valley are listed here, and are low in pyrophytic properties (they WILL NOT easily ignite or burn intensely).

The xeriscape and native plants, shrubs and trees listed that are in a RED ITALIC TYPEFACE & identified with the icon are HIGH IN PYROPHYTIC PROPERTIES (they WILL easily ignite or burn intensely).

HIGH PYROPHYTIC plants, shrubs and trees should be planted in areas further than 15 feet from a structure, including decks and patios. Maintenance of high pyrophytic plants should include removing all dead plant material. The crowns (lower branches) of shrubs should be raised at least 2 to 3 feet off the ground and limited to a single specimen with spacing between plants of 2 times the height of the tallest shrub, unless the shrub is isolated or heavily modified.

Flowering Perennials

- Alum Root
- Beardtongue
- Bergenia
- Blue Catmint
- Buckwheat - Sulphur-flowered
- Buckwheat - Wright’s
- Coral Bells
- Daylily
- Dianthus
- Fuchsia - California
- Garden Meadow
- Goldenrod - California
- Hollyhock
- Honeysuckle
- Iris - Bearded
- Jupiter’s Beard
- Lamb’s Ears
- Lavender
- Mallow - Apricot
- Mint - Coyote
- Mint - Hummingbird
- Mojave Mound
- Penstemon - Beakflowered
- Penstemon - Bumblebee
- Penstemon - Firecracker
- Penstemon - Scarlet
- Phlox - Creeping
- Poppy - California
- Poppy - Oriental
- Poppy - Prickly
- Primrose - California Evening
- Primrose - Fragrant Evening
- Rydberg’s Horkelia
- Shasta Daisy
- Wallflower - Western
- Western Blue Flag
- Whirling Butterflies
- Yarrow - Moonshine
- Yarrow - Paprika
- Yarrow - Wooly

Shrubs

- Apache Plume
- Blue Mist
- Butterfly Bush
- Currant
- Elderberry
- Gray Santolina (Lavender)
- Honey Suckle
- Lavender
- Lilac
- Oregon Grape
- Sage - Desert Purple
- Sage - Garden
- Sage - Meadow
- Sage - Rose
- Sage - Russian
- Sage - Silver
- Snowberry
- Wild Rose
- Bitter Brush –
- Flannel Bush –
- Juniper Shrubs (any type) –
- Manzanita - Greenleaf –
- Mountain Mahogany (Ironwood) –
- Mountain Whitethorn –
- Sagebrush –
- Serviceberry –

Ground Cover

- Coral Bells
- Dwarf Periwinkle
- Ivy Geranium
- Sandwort
- Strawberries
- Sweet Alyssum
- Trailing Ganzania
- Wolly Yarrow

Trees

- Black Oak
- Colorado Blue Spruce
- Cherry Plum
- Flowering Crab Apple
- Freeman Maple Tree
- Quaking Aspen
- Incense Cedar –
- Jeffrey Pine –
- Juniper – (all types, including Western Juniper) –
- Leyland Cypress –
- Pinyon Pine –
- White Fir –

Take Charge of Your Defensible Space by Limbing Your Trees

The Spacing Between Grass, Shrubs, and Trees is Crucial to Reduce the Spread of Wildfires.