

FIRE WISE LANDSCAPE

By

Scott Mauney, County Extension Agent

Palo Pinto County

The idea of a Firewise landscape is to have fire resistant plant materials placed in such a manner as to lessen the chances of wildfire reaching and burning your home. The landscape surrounding a home can become fuel for a wildfire.

Decks and siding easily can ignite when plants that burn quickly and produce high heat are placed adjacent to the home. A burning plant or group of plants in front of windows can cause glass breakage allowing fire to enter the home. Taller flames adjacent to the home can enter through the soffits.

Fire can get into the crowns of trees if plants are layered in such a way that the fire climbs into the treetops (ladder fuels). When flames burn through the tree crowns (canopy), intense heat and embers are given off. This causes burning materials to fall on the roof and surrounding vegetation

Plants placed so that a fire can spread to your home increase the chance of your home burning. Your home is a continuation of the fuel. Creating “defensible space” will greatly reduce your home’s risk to wildfire.

The most important portion of the home ignition zone is the defensible space (0-30 ft from the foundation). Highly flammable plants should be removed or isolated. Plants or plant groups should be isolated into islands, breaking up the fuel continuity. Also remove dead and dying plants and plant materials. Keeping more volatile and larger trees and plants to the outer portions of the defensible space is important.

Zero feet – 10 feet from Home

This area should have plants that are low to the ground, green and healthy. Use moist plants around the foundation. Keep them properly watered and avoid large clumps of plants that can generate high heat. Use material such as rock or stone instead of mulch around the home to create a buffer between the grass and foundation. Small shrubs with low density can provide beauty and other benefits. Maintenance includes keeping shrubs small, proper pruning and cleaning under all plants and maintaining a green and mowed lawn.

The following are examples of acceptable fire-resistant plants that could be used in the first 30 feet around your home: columbine, phlox, aster, primrose, violets, bluebells, gayfeather and bluebonnet. There are many more that you can choose from that have fire-resistant characteristics.

Ten feet – 30 feet from home

This area will most likely have trees, shrubs and grass. The grass should be watered regularly and cut short. Ladder fuels that allow fire to climb from lower to higher vegetation should be removed in this area. The best choices for trees are deciduous species with wide, broad leaves. Shrubbery and bushes should be placed away from trees and planted in islands or groupings. Use brick or stone along the edge of an island to slow the flame spread. Single plants or groups within islands provide a separation of fuels and are decorative. Small to medium deciduous trees are preferable to evergreens in this zone.

30 to 100 feet from the home

Firewood, small brush piles or stacks of building materials should be moved to this zone or further away.

Learn more about protecting your home and property at www.firewise.org and call the County Extension Office with your questions. 940-659-2588