

FIREWISE Landscaping



Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Division of Forestry

Firewise Landscaping Checklist

When designing and installing a firewise landscape, consider the following:

- ✓ Local area fire history.
- ✓ Site location and overall terrain.
- ✓ Prevailing winds and seasonal weather.
- ✓ Property contours and boundaries.
- ✓ Native vegetation.
- ✓ Plant characteristics and placement (duffage, water and salt retention ability, aromatic oils, fuel load per area, and size).
- ✓ Irrigation requirements.

To create a firewise landscape, remember that the primary goal is fuel reduction. To this end, initiate the zone concept. Zone 1 is closest to the structure; Zones 2-4 move progressively further away.

Zone 1. This well-irrigated area encircles the structure for at least 30' on all sides, providing space for fire suppression equipment in the event of an emergency. Plantings should be limited to carefully spaced low flammability species.

Zone 2. Low flammability plant materials should be used here. Plants should be low-growing, and the irrigation system should extend into this section.

Zone 3. Place low-growing plants and well-spaced trees in this area, remembering to keep the volume of vegetation (fuel) low.

Zone 4. This furthest zone from the structure is a natural area. Selectively prune and thin all plants and remove highly flammable vegetation.

Also remember to:

- ✓ Be sure to leave a minimum of 30' around the house to accommodate fire equipment, if necessary.
- ✓ Widely space and carefully situate the trees you plant.
- ✓ Take out the "ladder fuels" — vegetation that serves as a link between grass and tree tops. This arrangement can carry fire to a structure or from a structure to vegetation.
- ✓ Give yourself added protection with "fuel breaks" like driveways, gravel walkways, and lawns.

When maintaining a landscape:

- ✓ Keep trees and shrubs properly pruned. Prune all trees so the lowest limbs are 6' to 10' from the ground.
- ✓ Remove leaf clutter and dead and overhanging branches.
- ✓ Mow the lawn regularly.
- ✓ Dispose of cuttings and debris promptly, according to local regulations.
- ✓ Store firewood away from the house.
- ✓ Be sure the irrigation system is well maintained.
- ✓ Use care when refueling garden equipment and maintain it regularly.
- ✓ Store and use flammable liquids properly.
- ✓ Dispose of smoking materials carefully.
- ✓ Become familiar with local regulations regarding vegetation clearances, disposal of debris, and fire safety requirements for equipment.

Ohio Division of Forestry
2045 Morse Rd., H-1
Columbus, OH 43229
www.ohiodnr.com/forestry

