



■ **A Homeowner's Guide**  **to Firewise Landscaping** ■

Creating a “Defensible Space”

Many homes in Hidden Springs are adjacent to natural open space and are subject to the risk of wildfire. In order to reduce a home’s vulnerability to wildfire, creating “defensible space” around the structure is the single most effective thing a homeowner can do. The International Wildland–Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) for fire protection has devised defensible space size criteria for varying types of terrain and surrounding plant communities. For the type of terrain and plants that characterize Hidden Springs, shrubby grassland with slopes not exceeding 30%, the IWUIC recommends 30 feet of defensible space surrounding each individual home. For most homes in Hidden Springs that space will include the “building envelope” as defined in the Hidden Springs Community Design Guidelines. Within that 30’ space, plants and building materials should be limited to firewise choices. Regular seasonal maintenance within that area is also important to reduce the risk of wildfire.

Firewise Choices for the Landscape

The following information helps to define “firewise” plants and recommends plants that fit those criteria and also meet the aesthetic and wildlife habitat criteria for the Hidden Springs community. Also provided is a list of plants that should be used with caution due to their flammability. Neither of these lists are definitive nor exhaustive, there are many resources available to help you with this challenge; this sheet is meant as a starting point with references to additional information as needed.

Characteristics of Firewise Plants:
(Adapted from Appendix F, IWUIC)

All plants will burn under extreme fire weather conditions such as drought. However, plants burn at different intensities and rates of consumption. Fire-resistive plants burn at a relatively low intensity, with a slow rate of spread and with short flame lengths.

The following are characteristics of fire-resistive (firewise) vegetation.

- Plant growth with little or no accumulation of dead vegetation (either on the ground or standing upright).
- Nonresinous plants (plants without flammable oils and/or sap)
- Low growing vegetation with low fuel capacity (such as a grass area as opposed to a forest or shrub-covered land).
- Plants with high moisture content (plants that retain a large amount of water in their leaves and stems even through the hot summer months).
- Plants without ladder fuels (small, fine branches and limbs between the ground and the canopy of overtopping shrubs and trees).
- Plants requiring little maintenance (slow-growing plants that retain a low, tidy habit with little need for pruning or trimming).
- Plants with thick woody stems and branches that require prolonged heating to ignite.

Each home should be surrounded by 30’ of defensible space.



**Recommended
Firewise Plants**

Common Name

Botanical Name

Shade Trees

Skyline Honeylocust	Gleditsia Triacanthos 'Skyline'
Green Ash varieties	Fraxinus pennsylvanica
White Ash varieties	Fraxinus americana
American Sweetgum	Liquidambar styraciflua
Common Hackberry	Celtis occidentalis
Purple Robe Locust	Robinia pseudoacacia 'Purple Robe'

Compact American Cranberry	Viburnum trilobum
Bush Honeysuckle	Lonicera involucrata
Mountain ninebark	Physocarpus monogynus

Ornamental Trees

European Mt. Ash	Sorbus aucuparia
Eastern Redbud	Circus canadensis
Netleaf Hackberry	Celtis reticulata
Amur Maple	Acer ginnala
Heritage River Birch	Betula nigra 'Cully'
Washington Hawthorn	Crataegus Phaenopyrum
Crabapple species	Malus
Chokecherry	Prunus virginiana
Serviceberry species	Amelanchier
Desert Willow	Chilopsis linearis
Silver Buffalobery	Shepherdia argentea

Groundcover

Rosy Pussytoes	Antennaria rosea
Kinnikinnick	Arctostaphylos uva-ursi
Purple Ice Plant	Delosperma cooperi
Yellow Ice Plant	Delosperma nubigenum
Wild Strawberry	Fragaria
Creeping phlox	Phlox subulata
Sedum varieties	Sedum
Speedwell	Veronica
Drought Tolerant Turf Grass Varieties	

Evergreen Shrubs

Cranberry Cotoneaster	Cotoneaster apiculatus
Oregon Grape	Mahonia aquifolium
Creeping Oregon Grape	Mahonia repens
Boxwood	Paxistima myrtifolia
Yucca	Yucca
Agave	Agave

Vines (vines may require heavy trimming in order to reduce dead material)

Trumpet Vine	Campsis radicans
Climbing Honeysuckle	Lonicera
Clematis	Clematis
Grapes	Vitis
Virginia Creeper	Parthenocissus cinquefolia

Perennials

Red Yucca	Hesperaloe parviflora
Columbine	Aquilegia
Sea Thrift	Armeria maritima
Buckwheat varieties	Eriogonum
Coneflower	Echinacea
Blanket Flower	Gaillardia
Sun Rose	Helianthemum nummularium
Blue Flax	Linum
Evening Primrose	Oenothera
Penstemon	Penstemon
Mexican Hat	Ratiba columnifera
Flowering Sage var.	Salvia
Lambs Ear	Stachys byzantina
Yucca varieties	Yucca
Aster varieties	Aster
Spotted Gayfeather	Liatris punctata
Prickly Pear Cactus	Opuntia spp.

Deciduous Shrubs

Serviceberry (shrub types)	Amelanchier
Blue Mist Spirea	Caryopteris x clandonensis
Dogwood varieties	Cornus sericea, etc.
Dwarf Burning Bush	Euonymus alatus 'Compactus'
Mountain Spray	Holodiscus
Mock Orange	Philadelphus species
Western Sandcherry	Prunus besseyi
Oakleaf Sumac	Rhus triloba
Low-Gro Sumac	Rhus aromatica
Flowering Currant	Ribes
Woods Rose	Rosa woodsii
Lilac	Syringa



**Caution
&
Maintenance**

Use Some Plants with Caution!

The following list includes plants to use with caution in your defensible space/building envelope. Characteristics of more flammable plants include: being evergreen (trees and shrubs with needle-like foliage); having bark or leaves that contain resins, oil or pitch; drying out (ornamental grasses and bamboo). Do not plant these plants against your house or in a place where they could act as a conduit for fire leading from an open space area toward your house. If planted as individuals in contained, isolated, islands with the tips of branches at least 15-20 feet from your roofline, deck or other flammable structure, they can usually be maintained safely.

**Trees, Shrubs, Groundcovers, Perennials
– To Use With Caution –**

Common Name	Botanical Name
Juniper species	Juniperus
Sage brush species	Artemesia species
Rabbitbrush species	Chrysothamnus species
Arborvitae	Thuja species
Yarrow varieties	Achillea species
Lavendar varieties	Lavandula species
Rosemary varieties	Rosemarinus
Bamboo	Phyllostachys, Bambusa
Maiden Grass	Miscanthus
Fountain Grass	Pennisetum

Careful selection of building materials and plant materials is critical in the creation of defensible space.

Firewise Landscaping Tips for Within Your Defensible Space

- Choose firesafe building materials (metal, masonry, etc.) for fences, decks, trellises and other landscape structures.
- Store firewood away from your home.
- Keep lush plantings closer to your home to act as a fire buffer.
- Locate or prune trees so that there is a 10' horizontal clearance from the tip of branches to the house wall or roof structure.
- Use gravel or paved pathways as a firebreak.
- Incorporate low landscape masonry or stone walls that can also act as a firebreak.
- Use extreme caution when cooking outdoors, a gas flame is safer than a charcoal flame as it is easier to control. Locate BBQ close to house and surrounded by non-flammable materials.

Maintaining a Firewise Defensible Space

- Remove annual, herbaceous plants after they have gone to seed or when the stems dry out.
- Rake up and dispose of dry plant litter as it builds up over the season.
- Mow or trim grasses to a low height within your defensible space.
- Keep grass shortest in the inner part of your defensible space and no more than 6" high in the outer portions. This is especially important as they begin to cure and dry.
- Remove plant parts damaged by snow, wind, frost, insect or disease.
- Timely pruning is critical. It not only reduces fuel volume, but also maintains healthier plants with more succulent, vigorous growth.



References & Resources

Additional Publications for Firewise Landscaping:

Landscaping with Native Plants of the Intermountain Region – Technical Reference 1730-3, BLM, INPS, BSU Horticulture

Fire Resistant Plants for Home Landscapes – A Pacific Northwest Extension Publication – PNW 590 - OSU, WSU, Uof I

Living With Fire – A Guide for the Homeowner, Great Basin Fire Prevention

Forest Service Brochure No 6.305 of the Natural Resource Series, Phil Hofer – accessed online at <http://www.co.pueblo.co.us/fire/plants.pdf>

Informative Websites for Fire Prevention:

Bureau of Land Management, Nevada:
<http://www.nv.blm.gov/wgbcc>

Bureau of Land Management, Idaho:
<http://www.id.blm.gov/iso/fire/index.htm>

Bureau of Land Management, Utah:
<http://www.blm.gov/utah/fire/utfire.html>

U.S. Forest Service Intermountain Region:
<http://fsweb.r4.fs.fed.us>

Firewise: <http://firewise.org>

Fire Safe Council: <http://www.firesafecouncil.org>

FEMA: <http://www.fema.gov>

National Interagency Fire Center: <http://www.nifc.gov>

Smokey Bear: <http://smokeybear.com>



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