

Forestry Notes



Firewise Plant Selection

**Firewise plants in the right place
can help protect your home from wildfire**

Firewise Landscape, Defensible Space, and Defensible Zones

Firewise Landscape

The term "**Firewise Landscape**" means to design and manage the outdoor area around a home or structure to reduce wildfire risk.

Defensible Space

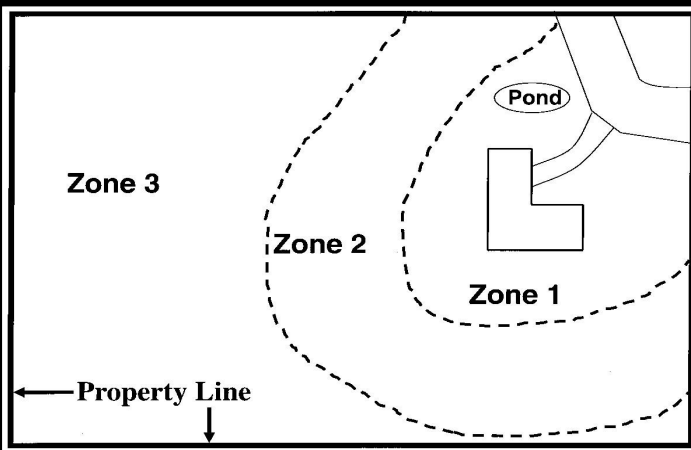
This is an area around a structure which provides space for fire fighters where vegetation is managed to slow the spread of wildfire.

Defensible Zones

These are up to 3 areas, or vegetative zones, around homes that are managed to provide the best mix of fire protection and landscaping.

The 3 zones ideally are:

- Zone 1** — 0 to 30 feet around the home
- Zone 2** — 30 to 75 feet
- Zone 3** — 75 to 100 feet from the home.



Plants for Defensible Zones

Ideally here are three Defensible Zones designated around a *Firewise* home and structures where the homeowner manages the vegetation to reduce the wildfire risk.

- Zone 1** — 0 to 30 feet around the home
- Zone 2** — 30 to 75 feet
- Zone 3** — 75 to 100 feet

A Firewise landscape plan design preferably uses native plants to reduce the risk of a wildfire.

Here are recommended plants with **Firewise** characteristics:

Firewise Ground Covers

Common Name

Ajuga (bugleweed)*
Bearberry (kinnikinnick)
Sedum
Bigleaf periwinkle*
Periwinkle (vinca)*
Bigblue lirope*
Lirope*

Botanical Name

*Ajuga reptans**
Arctostaphylos uva-ursi
Sedum spp.
*Vinca major**
*Vinca minor**
*Lirope muscari**
*Lirope spicata**

Grass ground covers are good if kept mowed and irrigated:

Kentucky bluegrass *
Tall fescue*
(* non-native)

*Poa pratensis**
*Festuca arundinacea**



Bearberry ground cover by David Powell, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

Native *Firewise* Shrubs That are Best for Zones 2 and 3

Common Name

Chokeberry, black
Chokeberry, red
Dogwood, gray
Dogwood, osier
Dogwood, silky

Spirea, meadowsweet
Spirea, steeplebush
Viburnum, mapleleaf
Viburnum, arrowwood
Viburnum, blackhaw
Viburnum, cranberrybush
Witch hazel

Botanical Name

Aronia melanocarpa
Aronia arbutifolia
Cornus racemosa
Cornus serica
Cornus amomum

Spirea alba
Spirea tomentosa
Viburnum acerifolium
Viburnum dentatum
Viburnum prunifolium
Viburnum opulus

Large, Native *Firewise* Trees (taller than 30 feet) for Zone 3

Common Name

Basswood, American

Birch, black (sweet)
Birch, gray
Birch, yellow

Hickory, bitternut
Hickory, mockernut
Hickory, pignut
Hickory, sand

Maple, red
Maple, sugar

Oak, chestnut
Oak, scarlet
Oak, northern red
Oak, pin
Oak, white

Sweetgum
Yellow-poplar

Botanical Name

Tilia Americana

Betula lenta
Betula populifolia
Betula allegheniensis

Carya cordiformis
Carya alba
Carya glabra
Carya pallid

Acer rubrum
Acer saccharum
Quercus prinus
Quercus coccinea
Quercus rubra
Quercus palustris
Quercus alba

Liquidambar styraciflua
Liriodendron tulipifera



Red maple—a tall *Firewise* tree

Use Plants with *Firewise* Characteristics

Choosing Plants

A *Firewise Landscape* with Defensive Zones, uses plants to meet landscape design goals and to help protect property. Some plants contain more oils and resins and are more likely to catch fire and burn hotter than other plants.

While there are no *fireproof plants*, choosing less flammable species can help to reduce the chance of wildfire damaging your home.

Desirable *Firewise* Plants:

- Slow-growing plants
- High moisture content plants
- Plants that produce less dead plant tissue
- Plants with less resins and oils in leaves
- Plants with broad, thick leaves
- Plants with open branching patterns

Most deciduous trees are generally good *Firewise* Landscape choices.

Contact your local nursery for more ideas.



Basswood—a tall *Firewise* tree