Plan, Plant and Maintain Firewise Landscaping

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Texas is a land of perennial drought broken by the occasional devastating flood.

unknown state meteorologist from Texas in 1927
Creating a HIZ safe landscape

Fire resilient landscape

- Choose plants that are less volatile and fire resistant
- Consider placement and proximity to structures and improvements
- Trim tree limbs to minimize the ladder fuel effect
- Keep lawns mowed short and green
- Use concrete or gravel walkways as fire breaks
Fine Fuels

- Do not assume that light fuels are less likely to ignite homes
- This home was destroyed by low intensity fire
- Note that the trees in this landscape were not consumed
Low intensity surface fire

- This fire travelled through leaf litter and ignited combustible stairs
- The home was otherwise fire resistant
Landscaping Combustibles

- Landscape timbers
- Railroad ties
- Combustible mulches
- Cured grass
- Foundation plantings
- Lack of mitigation-oriented maintenance
Deck Mitigation

Mitigation:
- Pre-treat with fire-resistant paint or chemicals
- Remove vegetation directly under or adjacent
- Utilize not combustible decking material
Fences act as fuses during a WUI fire

Mitigation: minimize combustible materials and vegetation adjacent to fence. Utilize a non combustible attachment or spacer such as masonry between the home and the fence.
Barriers to fire spread

**Remember:** just as there are things that increase a homes vulnerability, there are things that can be advantageous like this green fire break.
Barriers to fire spread

Fire-resistant vegetation and landscaping isolated by noncombustible surfaces
Barriers to fire spread

Gravel spacer (*doubles as a splash guard for house*)

Windows unobstructed by vegetation
Barriers to fire spread

This gravel walkway created a barrier that aided firefighters in defending this home

*Pinnacle Fire in Austin*
Barriers to fire spread

**Retaining Walls** can act as a vertical barrier that interrupts the continuity of fuels.
Barriers to fire spread

Green Firebreaks
This irrigated grass stopped the surface fire from reaching this home
**Secondary Fuel Sources**

- Vehicles
- Outbuildings
- Firewood
- Patio Furniture
- Door Mats
- Pergolas
- Potted Plants
- Hot Tubs
- Boardwalks

Note the burning bench
Now you know

- Homes can ignite through: Ember Intrusion, Radiant Heat, and Direct Flame contact
- Maintaining quality Defensible Space and using Ignition Resistant Materials will greatly increase a homes survivability
- An educated and empowered homeowner can be our first line of defense
- We can work with our residents to give us a better chance at saving our homes and communities from wildfires
Create Fuel Breaks

Use sidewalks, gravel paths, driveways
A surface fire couldn’t spread through this yard
Gravel Spacer
(doubles as a splash guard for house)

Windows
unobstructed by vegetation
Foundation Plants

- Avoid highly volatile junipers
- Plant low-growing shrubs
- Space shrubs away from windows, decks & wood fences
- Use non-flammable mulches
- Consider using succulents
Firewise plant characteristics

- Low amount of dead material, litter and debris
- Non-resinous and low oil content
- Open, loose branching
- Drought resistant
- Holds high moisture content in leaves
- Easy to maintain and prune
Plants to Avoid or Isolate

- Juniper
- Yaupon Holly
Groundcover

- Less than 12” tall
- Fire Resistant varieties
- Keep the dead cut away
- Mow during dormancy
- Use as an alternative to grass
Trees

- Plant hardwoods
- Plan for growth when planting
- Limb the trees up to 5 feet
- Avoid planting ladder fuels
Shrubs

• Plant low-growing (2 feet tall or less) near structures

• Avoid planting volatile shrubs near windows, decks or wood fences

• Modify shrubs with rock mulch and other vegetation
Maintenance

• Irrigate Zone 1

• Keep grass and groundcovers short (especially in winter)

• Prune and rake all dead matter from flowerbeds, shrubs, groundcovers

• Rake and remove leaves, pine straw

• Replace dead plants
A minimum 30 feet of survivable space

Tree limbs pruned at least 5 feet high

Screened in decks, patios and vents

Fire-resistant roof materials

A well-maintained lawn

Flower beds, trees set apart in islands
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