



Firescaping

“We didn’t start the fire! It was always burning since the world’s been turning. We didn’t start the fire! No, we didn’t light it but we’re trying to fight it.”

For the last month or so, it seems like it’s been impossible to go outside without choking on smoke or seeing gray skies from the fires burning across California and most of the Western states. As our wildfire season has gotten more intense in the last few years, we thought it would be helpful to share some tips on readying your home in the event of a wildfire in your area. While nothing can 100% guarantee that your home will be safe from fire, there are things that you can do to help lessen the risk.

CalFire has three suggestions to help prepare your home for wildfires that we’ll share with you. These apply in particular to homes in high risk areas, e.g. mountainous areas and foothills, wildland areas and hot, dry areas. However, even in more urban areas, if you have a home and landscape, it can’t hurt to be prepared. Check out the included links to CalFire’s websites and brochures for more information on wildfire preparedness.

First-create a defensible space. This simply means maintaining a space around the home that is free from brush, debris, dry or dead trees and shrubs, dry grass, etc. Keep your roof and gutters free of debris that can easily be ignited from flying embers.

<https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-ready/defensible-space/>

Second-consider a fire-resistant landscape.

Believe it or not, you can landscape your home in such a way that it can be more resistant to fire. Plant selection is a huge part of this. Consider hardwood trees like maples or poplars over things like pines and firs. Conifers tend to be highly flammable, especially when they get dry.

Use hardscapes around the home. Patios, decks or walls made from stone or concrete or other non-combustible materials can help in creating a fire break between a fire and your home.

Obviously, a healthy landscape will be less likely to burn simply because the plants are not dry and therefore tinder for a fire. Keep your landscape properly irrigated. A healthy and well-maintained lawn can be another buffer zone around your home.

Here are a few fire-resistant plant suggestions for you. There are definitely more than these, but this is a start!

Aloe	California Fuchsia	Coreopsis	French Lavender
Iceplant	Sage/Salvia	Yarrow	

<https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-ready/fire-resistant-landscaping/>



Last -harden your home.

This simply means using fire resistant materials when building or updating your home. For example, if it's time to replace your roof, think about using metal or tile rather than wood or traditional shingles. Double pane windows are another home upgrade that can help in lessening your wildfire risk. Decks, or any surface within 10 feet of the home, should be built or redone using fire resistant or non-combustible materials.

<https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-ready/hardening-your-home/>

There is no such thing as a fireproof home or landscape. But taking proper steps to make your home more fire-resistant can be vital to saving your home.

https://www.readyforwildfire.org/wp-content/uploads/Ready-Set-Go-Plan-09_CALFIRE_sm.pdf

<https://www.firefree.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Fire-Resistant-Plants.pdf>

Meet the authors!

Jenna Fowler	Michael Hudson
Jenna is from Pleasant Grove, UT and now lives in San Jose. She started as a groundskeeper at Stanford in March 2019. Jenna graduated from Utah State University with a BS in Residential Landscape Design and Construction. What a mouthful! She recently started a class to become a certified florist and has plans to open a flower shop one day.	Michael is a Bay Area native. He joined Stanford as a groundskeeper in April 2016. Michael has been employed in the nursery/gardening industry for over 20 years. He is a California Certified Nursery Professional (CCNPro) and graduated college with an AA in Liberal Arts.

Authors:

Jenna Fowler, jefowler@stanford.edu
Michael Hudson, mhudson2@stanford.edu