

KPOV – *The Point*
Gardening: Get Good at It
“Fire Safe Yards”
October 30, 2018

Whether you are a welcome newcomer or one of the old guard in Central Oregon, each of us has a wildfire story that directly or indirectly affected our lives. My most recent experience was the Two Bulls Fire that threatened our newly built home. We were moving IN when the firemen came to our door and told us to evacuate and get OUT- NOW!

In researching today’s topic on fire safe yards, I opened the website- www.firefree.org and decided that the information on the site could not be written any better by me and as a veteran Master Gardener with a mission to Teach Support and Promote good gardening practices in Central Oregon I’ve decided to share with you what I learned directly through the firefree.org website. So here goes...

“During wildfires, most homes are lost as a result of ember showers that deposit glowing embers on vulnerable areas like roof valleys, gutters, and lawn furniture. They smolder in gathered pine needles, leaves, and even furniture cushions - eventually igniting nearby flammable structures such as fascia boards, fences, decks, and siding. Embers can travel many miles from a wildfire causing this type of secondary damage.

Gutters filled with pine needles and other debris provide the perfect nest for fire brands [burning wood and embers] so keep your gutters clean to prevent possible ignition of the fascia boards which can lead fire directly under your roofing material and ignite the structure underneath. Homes lost during wildfires are a result of ground and “ladder” fuels that lead fire directly to flammable structures and components. Defensible space is not a moonscape; you don’t have to compromise trees or landscaping for fire safety.

Ultimately, there are not enough fire trucks and personnel to protect every home. The truth is, there will never be enough trucks to protect each and every home in a wildland fire situation. During a wildland fire, fire agencies are maxed out and concentrate on halting the fire's advancement. There is no time to prepare all the individual homes against the oncoming threat. Firefighters are relying on you to do your part to protect your property from the catastrophic effects of wildfire. Take responsibility now, and prepare your home’s ignition zone for wildland fire.”

“Trim or remove brush to eliminate a direct path for fire to reach your home or spread into trees by removing flammable brush species from your defensible space. Prune low hanging branches and thin out dense stands of trees to reduce the potential for fire to reach treetops and spread to other trees. Trim grass and weeds to prevent the rapid spread of fire and high flames. Keep combustible materials at least 30 feet away from your home and outbuildings. Keep all brush and weeds at least 10 feet away from woodpiles, propane, and fuel tanks. Clear pine needles, leaves, and debris from your yard, deck, roof, and gutters to reduce places where embers can smolder and ignite your home. Remove overhanging and dead tree branches.”

Autumn is the perfect time to prepare your yard for winter and for next fire season by clearing yard debris. But what do you do with all that debris now that you’ve cleared away and cleaned up? Take advantage of FireFree events!

Deschutes County residents can recycle yard debris at Deschutes Recycling for HALF PRICE... \$2.00per cubic yard from October 29th through November 10th.

Jefferson County will hold FireFree Events at the Box Canyon Transfer Station October 13-14 and 20-21.

Check FireFree.org for the latest information.

I've begun cleaning and clearing at my home and garden and invite you to do the same at yours in creating an interesting and aesthetically pleasing "fire-resistant" landscape.

Look for more information about fire safe yards on our website at www.gocomga.com and click the KPOV tab on the orange bar. Thanks for listening to "Gardening- Get Good at It" on KPOV- The Point.

Resources:

<http://www.firefree.org>

FireFree Events

<http://www.firefree.org/firefreeevents/>

FireWise

<https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/Wildfire/Firewise-USA>

Fire Resistant Plants for Home Landscapes

<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/pnw590.pdf>

Fire Resistant Landscaping

<http://www.readyforwildfire.org/Fire-Safe-Landscaping/>

Fire Resistant Plants for Oregon Home Landscapes

https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fsbdev3_035870.pdf

Home Landscaping for Fire

http://firecenter.berkeley.edu/docs/CE_homelandscaping.pdf