

## Landscaping your Capes home to minimize fire danger



*Figure 1.—A fuel break that includes fire-resistant plants can help protect your home by reducing and blocking intense heat.*

In the summer of 2020, there was a wildfire on the north side of highway 131 which was spreading rapidly and threatened The Capes. We were fortunate that the Netarts-Oceanside Fire Department was able to respond in time and put it out. Given the tremendous amount of fuel available (trees, needles, etc.) it would not take much to have it rapidly spread throughout the community.

The Oregon Coast is not immune from wildfires, although the risk for most of the year is very low due to the rain and high humidity. But it's the dry summer months that can turn hot and windy, with low humidity setting up a perfect environment for a rapidly spreading wildfire. While The Capes has established rules prohibiting activity which may set off a fire (no outdoor burning/fire pits, no fireworks, no firewood stored outside, etc.), at this time of year a single spark is all it takes. This document is intended to provide guidelines to all owners about what we can do to minimize the spread of fire throughout our community should a fire break out.

The Oregon State University extension service has published guidelines for rural communities called “Home Ignition Zone”. They divide property around the home into three zones:

- The immediate zone which extends outward from the foundation 5 feet
- The intermediate zone which extends from 5 to 30 feet
- The extended zone which extends from 30 to 100 feet

#### The Immediate Zone: foundation to 5 feet

Maintain a **noncombustible area at least 5 feet wide** around the base of your home. Walkways, gravel, concrete, and rock are examples. Here at The Capes, it is often difficult to have a gravel path 5 feet wide, but at a minimum remove plants and trees which are in this zone. Remove any pine needles that have accumulated. Replant with grass and keep it maintained to no more than 4 inches high as an alternative to gravel, etc.

Remove dead vegetation and any debris under decks. Do not store lumber, firewood, or other flammable materials underneath.

Store patio furniture and other items in your garage when the wildfire threat is high.

Do not apply bark dust or other wood products to this area.

#### The Intermediate Zone: 5 feet to 30 Feet

Maintain a low density of vegetation and prevent the accumulation of dead vegetation or debris in this area. Plants need to be watered during the dry season; any dead plants removed.

Prune trees upward to reduce the chance that a surface fire will move into the upper canopy. Lower limbs as well as small trees and shrubs are known as ladder fuels as a fire can climb up to the upper part and spread more rapidly.

Prune individual tree canopies at least 10 feet away from the home and roof.

Remove dead plant material such as leaves, needles, and twigs.

Thin out dense patches of trees and shrubs to create separation between them to slow the spread of fire. Trees should be spaced 15-20 feet apart between tree tops.

## The Extended Zone: 30 to 100 feet

Remove dead vegetation and thick accumulations of needles and leaves.

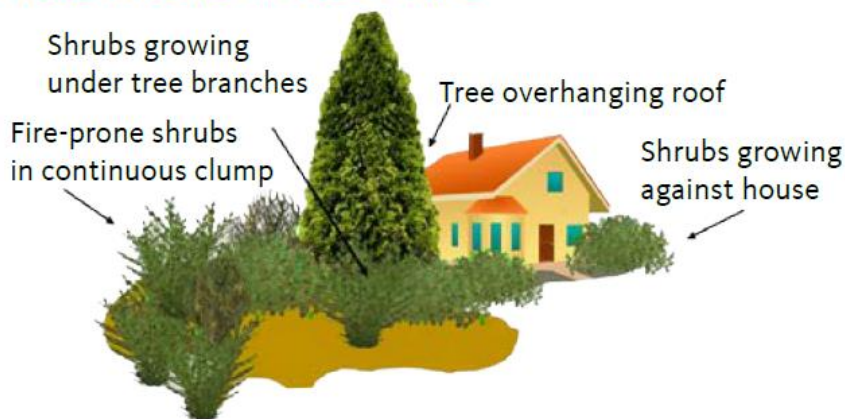
Keep any grass cut down.

Remove invasive weeds such as blackberries and Scotch broom (which are highly flammable).

Remove ladder fuels such as low tree branches and small trees growing between mature trees.

Thin out trees.

### **FIRE-PRONE LANDSCAPE**



### **FIRE-RESISTANT LANDSCAPE**

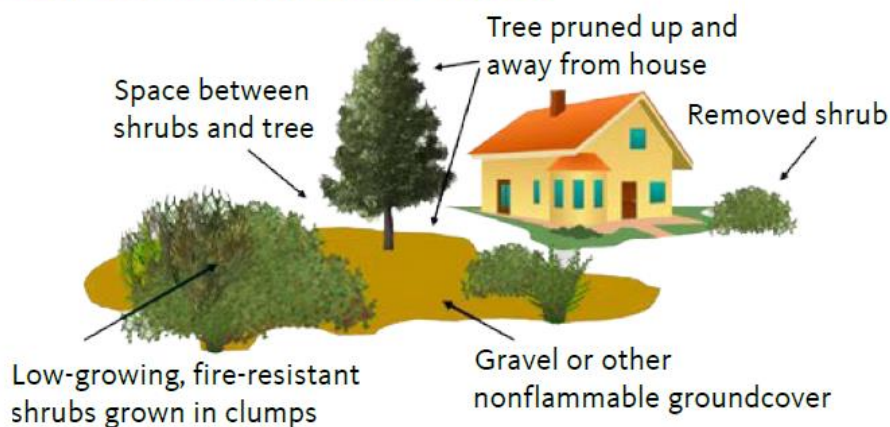


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