



Fireproof Your Landscape

By **Denis Mudge** / Orange County/UF Cooperative Extension Service

In the news lately are reports of wildfires threatening homes and causing panic as dry conditions cause the smoke and fire to spread.

Do you remember spring of 1998? Maybe it was the year you grew some great looking roses or produced a bumper crop of two pound tomatoes. You might also remember it was another dry time with lots of smoke and wildfires.

Perhaps you thought it couldn't happen again and ignored the precautions suggested to gardeners take to prevent fires. But recently, residents in Orange, Osceola, Lake and other Florida counties experienced out of control fires approaching their communities. It can happen again and it's not too late to fireproof your landscape.

Homes bordering forests and other areas of natural vegetation are the most susceptible to damage from wildfires. You can protect your property by developing what fire fighters call a defensible space of 30 to 50 feet surrounding your home. It's a safety zone of reduced vegetation and natural fire barriers. Within this area keep plants from touching the roof of the home and remove dead or declining limbs that provide fuel for fires. Also be selective when adding new plants. Pick types that are less likely to burn.

Don't plant these near your house:

American Holly, Arborvitae, Eucalyptus, Fountain Grass, Gallberry, Italian Cypress, Juniper, Leyland Cypress, Pampas Grass, Pine Trees, Red Cedar, and Saw Palmetto, Wax Myrtle, and Yaupon Holly

Good fire resistant plants to use in your landscape:

African Iris, Citrus, Daylily, Lantana, Lily of Nile, Live oak, Maples, Magnolia, Oleander, Periwinkle, Philodendron, and Viburnum

Protect Your Home and Landscape:

- Create clusters of vegetation with large open areas of at least 10 feet between plantings to help stop flames from moving between plants.
- Limit shrubs to 3 to 4 feet tall under trees to prevent fire from leaping up into the canopy.
- Irrigate plantings surrounding the home during the dry season to reduce the risk of fire.
- Plant beds of perennials and other low growing flowers near the home for color.
- Use driveways, walkways and areas of green turf to slow or stop advancing fires.
- Mow lawns as needed to encourage green vigorous growth. Also control weeds and reduce brush bordering the property.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

On how to create an attractive, fire sage landscape:
Call the OC/UF Extension Education Center at (407) 254-9200
or visit: <http://ocextension.ifas.ufl.edu>