



WILDFIRE MITIGATION BASICS FOR BOULDER COUNTY

RESILIENT LANDSCAPING

Ignition Resistant Landscaping Best Practices



Why?

The landscaping around your home should be designed to contribute to your home's defensible space and to community resilience. The following best practices are designed to help slow or prevent the advance of wildfire on your property.

How?



Image courtesy of Northern Water & Norris Design

Start with a 5-foot noncombustible zone around your home.

- There should be little to no vegetation in the first 5 feet around the house and outbuildings. Any sparse plantings should consist of low, ignition resistant, and well-maintained ground covers.

Within 30 feet of your house, create islands or clusters of vegetation by including hardscaping features and turf.

- The closer plants are to the house, the lower, more ignition resistant, spread out, and well maintained they should be.
- Use boulders, turf, gravel or stone to break up vegetation.
- Choose plants with high moisture content, including succulents, cacti, perennials, and deciduous shrubs and trees.

Thoughtfully locate trees and shrubs.

- Trees and larger shrubs should be spaced to avoid flame spread from one to another. Avoid fuel laddering.

Coniferous plants are much more combustibile than deciduous.

- Avoid planting new conifers and junk existing junipers.
- Trim existing conifers away from the ground and the house.



Ladder fuels are combustible materials that create a vertical path. It's important to consider plant placement and spacing in our landscaping since low intensity fire close to the ground is much easier to fight than high intensity fire overhead.

- During an extreme wildfire, embers land up to a mile ahead of the flame front.
- These embers won't have enough heat or energy to ignite larger fuels like a tree. However...
- Like a campfire, fine fuels that are close to the ground will ignite.
- Breaking up continuity to taller or more fuel-intensive material will help control the spread of wildfire.

Use pea gravel or squeegee rock mulch when possible. Avoid wood mulch.

- Use organic mulch sparingly, and ideally phase out once plants are established.

Maintenance is required!

- Be prepared to clear away dead and dry vegetation; continue to water in winter.

DO YOU KNOW?

When choosing ignition resistant plants, look or ask for plants that are low in oils and resins and high in moisture content. Choose native and native adapted when you can, since local flora and fauna have co-evolved to support each other!



WILDFIREPARTNERS.ORG

Key Elements of Ignition Resistant (IR) Landscaping

Non-flammable materials, native adapted plants, and proper spacing are key elements of climate adapted landscaping in areas with potential for wildfire risk. The photos below just scratch the surface of possibilities!

- Four inches of pea gravel or squeegee can replace wood mulch and suppress weeds.
- Hardscaping - like gravel, pavers, and boulders - helps break up continuous vegetation to minimize fire spread.
- Deciduous shrubs and non-combustible material can replace junipers or wood fencing for privacy screening.
- Irrigated turf and pavers can act as a fire break between the landscape and the home.
- Low limb conifers to prevent combustible needles from directly contacting the ground during an ember storm.
- Choose native or native-adapted plants. Healthy plants will be more resilient to stressors like disease and wildfire.



5-FOOT NONCOMBUSTIBLE ZONE



NONFLAMMABLE PLANTERS & HARDSCAPE



IRRIGATED TURF AND PAVERS



SQUEEGEE MULCH & GRAVEL HARDSCAPE



ISLANDS OF IR VEGETATION



SHRUBS AS PRIVACY SCREENING



METAL PRIVACY SCREENING



CONIFERS LIMBED UP



DECIDUOUS VEGETATION NEAR BUILDINGS

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Northern Water's Sustainable Landscaping Templates:

<https://boco.org/sustainable-landscape-templates>

CSU Extension Ignition Resistant Landscape Plants:

<https://boco.org/ignition-resistant-landscape-plants>

Colorado State Forest Service HIZ Guide: <https://boco.org/home-ignition-zone>

