



# **Fire-Resistant Plants for Oregon Home Landscapes**

*Suggesting specific  
types of vegetation  
that may reduce your  
risk from wildfire.*

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# Introduction

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## Oregon has many wildfire prone areas.

In these places, fires are a natural part of the changing landscape. As homes are built in these areas, special precautions must be taken by the homeowner to protect their property. Installation of fire-resistant roofing is critical to preventing firebrands from igniting the home from a roof fire. Well maintained fire-resistant vegetation and irrigated landscape is also critical within close proximity of a home. These actions DO NOT insure that your home will survive a wildfire, but they provide for a good chance of structural survival. Implementation of FireFree [[www.firefree.org](http://www.firefree.org)] and FireWise [[www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)] activities can also significantly improve chances of a home surviving a wildfire.



## Fire-resistant vegetation.

When landscaping around a home, most homeowners are interested in creating a landscape that is aesthetically pleasing, compliments their home, and has variations in color, texture, flowers, and foliage. If your home is located in or adjacent to forests or rangeland, you should also consider the flammability of plants within your home landscape.

Flammable plant material in your landscape can increase the fire-risk around your home. The 1991 Oakland Hills Fire in California is a prime example of how flammable plant material (Eucalyptus trees) can act as fuel and contribute to the intensity of a wildfire. Over 3,000 homes were destroyed in that devastating wildfire.

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## **Taking action.**

Homeowners should take active steps to minimize or reduce the fuel and fire-hazard around their homes, *including* planting fire-resistant plants. Good placement and on-going maintenance of fire-resistant trees, for example, can, in fact, help protect your home by blocking intense heat. [See Figure 1, next page]

## **Making choices.**

There is a wide array of trees and other plants to choose for your landscape that are both attractive and fire-resistant. This publication provides a diverse list of plant material divided into perennials, groundcovers, trees, and shrubs.

## **Annuals.**

Annuals can be part of a fire-resistant landscape if well watered and well maintained. We have not listed each of these due to the large number of annuals available to the homeowner.

## **Turf.**

A well maintained lawn can be included in a fire-resistant landscape and serves well as an effective fuel break (See photo). For more information on lawn care and maintenance, check out available publications from your local OSU Extension Service.

## **A Caution About Bark Mulch.**

Bark mulch is often used in home landscapes. However, fire brands from a wildfire and cigarettes can ignite dry bark mulch, conveying the fire to your home. If you landscape with bark mulch up against your home, make sure it remains moist to prevent ignition.

## What are **fire-resistant** plants?

Fire-resistant plants are plants that don't readily ignite from a flame or other ignition sources. Although fire-resistant plants can be damaged or even killed by fire, their foliage and stems don't contribute significantly to the fuel and, therefore, the fire's intensity.

### **Fire Resistant does not mean fire proof.**

Plants that are fire-resistant have the following characteristics:

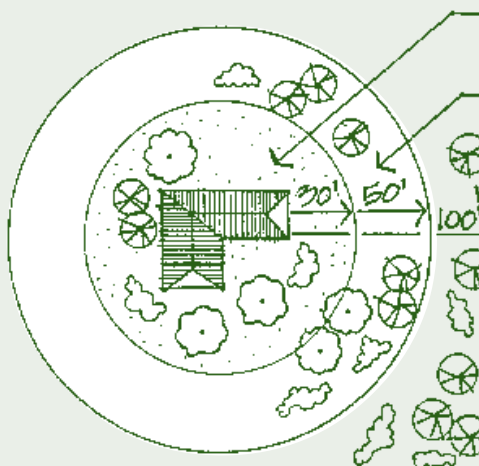
- **Leaves are moist and supple.**
- **Plants have little dead wood and tend not to accumulate dry, dead material within the plant.**
- **Sap is water-like and does not have a strong odor.**

Most deciduous trees and shrubs are fire-resistant. However, **it's important to remember that even fire-resistant plants can burn**, particularly if they are not maintained in a healthy condition.

Figure 1



CONCEPT FOR FIRE PROT



In contrast, plants that are **highly flammable** have these general characteristics:

- ❖ Contain fine, dry or dead material within the plant such as twigs, needles, and leaves.
- ❖ Leaves, twigs, and stems contain volatile waxes, terpenes, or oils.
- ❖ Leaves are aromatic (strong smell when crushed)
- ❖ Sap is gummy, resinous and has a strong odor.
- ❖ May have loose or papery bark.

Both ornamental and native plants can be highly flammable. An example of a highly flammable ornamental shrub often planted in home landscapes is ornamental juniper. Examples of highly flammable native shrubs include bitterbrush, manzanita, sagebrush, and ceanothus. **Avoid planting these plants around your home.**

*-Adapted from University of California Cooperative Extension Hortscript, 1996, No. 18.*



## PROTECTION VEGETATION ZONES

- IRRIGATED FIRE-RESISTANT PLANTS ZONE
- TRANSITION FIRE-RESISTANT PLANTS ZONE
- NON-IRRIGATED MAINTAINED NATIVE PLANTS ZONE

*Illustration by Robin Lee Gyorgyfalvy*

## How this list was developed

This list was developed by evaluating fire-resistant plant lists developed for other regions and screening the scientific literature on plant flammability. Included in this list are plants adapted to grow *in* Oregon in either irrigated or non-irrigated landscapes. However, most of the plants on this list require some level of irrigation to survive during the dry summer months, particularly in central and eastern Oregon.

The plants in this publication are adaptable in **all regions** of Oregon **unless otherwise marked** with an identifying orange symbol. Plants marked with these symbols are suitable only for the regions specified.

### KEY:

- C** = Central Oregon
- E** = Eastern Oregon
- S** = Southern Oregon
- W** = Western Oregon

- \* Before deciding on which plants to purchase for your yard, please check with your homeowners association landscape review committee.

#### Disclaimer

*The purpose of this document is to provide homeowners with guidance on ways to landscape their property with fire resistant vegetation to help reduce losses from wildfire damage. It contains suggestions and recommendations based on professional judgment, experience and research and is intended to serve only as a guide. The authors, contributors and publisher disclaim all warranties and guarantees with respect to the information in the document and assume no liability or responsibility with respect to the information.*



# Groundcovers



*Ajuga reptans*  
**Carpenter Bugweed**



*Delosperma cooperi*  
**Purple/Pink Iceplant**



*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*  
**Kinnikinnick**



*Duchesnea indica*  
**Mock Strawberry**

C  
E  
S



*Ceanothus prostratus*  
**Squaw Carpet**



*Echeveria species*  
**Hens and Chicks**



*Cerastium tomentosum*  
**Snow-in-Summer**



*Fragaria species*  
**Wild Strawberry**



*Delosperma nubigenum*  
**Yellow Iceplant**



*Pachysandra terminalis*  
**Japanese Pachysandra**

S  
W

# Groundcovers



*Phlox subulata*  
**Creeping Phlox**



*Thymus praecox*  
**Creeping Thyme**



*Sedum species*  
**Sedum or Stonecrops**



*Vinca minor*  
**Periwinkle**

**C**  
**E**

# Perennials



*Achillea species*  
**Yarrow**



*Armeria maritima*  
**Sea Thrift**



*Allium schoenoprasum*  
**Chives**



*Aurinia saxatilis*  
**Basket-of-Gold**

**C** = Central Oregon

**E** = Eastern Oregon



# Perennials



*Bergenia cordifolia*  
**Heartleaf Bergenia**



*Helianthemum nummularium*  
**Sun Rose**



*Carex species*  
**Sedges**



*Hemerocallis hybrids*  
**Daylilies**



*Coreopsis species*  
**Coreopsis**



*Heuchera species*  
**Coral Bells**



*Epilobium angustifolium*  
**Fireweed**



*Hosta species*  
**Hosta Lilies**



*Geranium species*  
**Cranesbill**



*Iris species*  
**Iris**

**S** = Southern Oregon

**W** = Western Oregon

# Perennials



*Kniphofia uvuria*  
**Red-hot Poker**



*Oenothera missouriensis*  
**Evening Primrose**  
**Ozark Sundrops**



*Linum perenne*  
**Blue Flax**



*Penstemon species*  
**Penstemon**



*Lupinus species*  
**Lupine**



*Stachys byzantina*  
**Lamb's Ear**

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# Shrubs-broadleaf evergreen



*Cotoneaster species*  
**Cotoneaster**



*Mahonia repens*  
**Creeping Holly**



*Daphne x burkwoodii*  
var. 'Carol Mackie'  
**Carol Mackie Daphne**



*Pachystima myrsinites*  
**Oregon Boxwood**

**S**  
**W**



*Gaultheria shallon*  
**Salal**

**S**  
**W**



*Rhododendron*  
*macrophyllum*  
**Pacific Rhododendron**



*Ligustrum species*  
**Privet**

**S**  
**W**



*Rhododendron*  
*occidentale*  
**Western Azalea**



*Mahonia aquifolium*  
**Oregon Grapeholly**



*Yucca species*  
**Yucca**

**S** = Southern Oregon

**W** = Western Oregon



# Shrubs - deciduous



*Acer circinatum*  
**Vine Maple**



*Cornus stolonifera*  
**Redosier Dogwood**



*Acer glabrum*  
**Rocky Mountain Maple**



*Euonymus alatus*  
**Burning Bush**



*Amelanchier alnifolia*  
**Pacific Serviceberry**



*Holodiscus discolor*  
**Oceanspray**

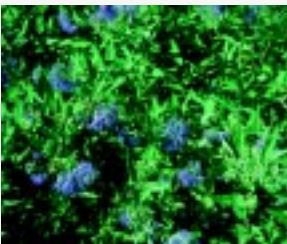
**C**  
**E**



*Buddleia davidii*  
**Butterfly Bush**



*Philadelphus species*  
**Mockorange**



*Caryopteris x clandonensis*  
**Blue Mist Spirea**



*Rhus species*  
**Sumac**

**C** = Central Oregon

**E** = Eastern Oregon

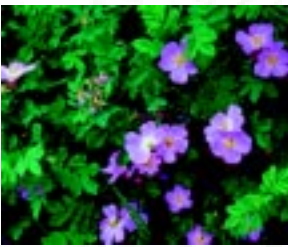
## Shrubs - deciduous



*Ribes species*  
**Flowering Currant**



*Spiraea douglasii*  
**Western Spirea**



*Rosa woodsii*  
**Wood's Rose**



*Symphoricarpos albus*  
**Snowberry**



*Spiraea x bumalda*  
*'Goldflame'*  
**Goldflame Spirea**



*Syringa species*  
**Lilac**

## Trees - evergreen



*Larix occidentalis*  
**Western Larch**



*Pinus lambertiana*  
**Sugar Pine<sup>1</sup>**

**S** = Southern Oregon

**W** = Western Oregon



## Trees - evergreen



*Pinus contorta*  
*var. murrayana*  
**Lodgepole Pine** <sup>1</sup>



*Pinus ponderosa*  
**Ponderosa Pine**

1. - Foliage is moderately resistant to fire.

## Trees - deciduous

**S**  
**W**



*Acer macrophyllum*  
**Bigleaf Maple**



*Acer rubrum*  
*var. 'Sunset'*  
**Sunset Maple**



*Acer platanoides*  
**Norway Maple**



*Aesculus hippocastanum*  
**Horsechestnut**

**S**  
**W**



*Alnus rubra*  
**Red Alder**



*Cercis canadensis*  
**Eastern Redbud**

**C** = Central Oregon

**E** = Eastern Oregon

# Trees - deciduous

C  
E



*Alnus tenuifolia*  
**Mountain Alder**

S  
W



*Cornus florida*  
**Flowering Dogwood**



*Betula species*  
**Birch**



*Fagus species*  
**Beech**



*Catalpa speciosa*  
**Western Catalpa**



*Fraxinus species*  
**Ash**



*Celtis occidentalis*  
**Common Hackberry**



*Gleditsia triacanthos*  
**Honeylocust**



*Gymnocladus dioica*  
**Kentucky Coffee Tree**



*Prunus virginiana*  
**Chokecherry**

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**W** = Western Oregon

# Trees - deciduous



*Juglans species*  
**Walnut**



**S**  
**W**

*Quercus garryana*  
**Oregon White Oak**

**S**  
**W**



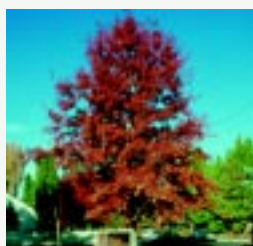
*Liquidambar styraciflua*  
**American Sweetgum**



*Quercus palustris*  
**Pin Oak**



*Malus species*  
**Crabapple**



*Quercus rubra*  
**Red Oak**



*Populus species*  
**Aspen/Cottonwoods**



*Robinia pseudoacacia*  
**Black Locust**



*Salix species*  
**Willow**



*Sorbus aucuparia*  
**European Mountain Ash**

## Notes

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## **Plant descriptions and availability**

For a detailed description of the plants on this list, consult local nurseries or refer to the Sunset Western Garden Book and the A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants. These publications can be obtained at local bookstores or nurseries. If you are unable to find some of these plants locally, check out the Oregon Association of Nurserymen's website for plant availability at:

<http://www.nurseryguide.com>

Scroll down to "Search For..." and click on Plants by Name. Type in the name of the plant you're interested in and the search will give you a list of nurseries that carry the plant.

### **Help us identify other fire-resistant plants**

If you know of other fire-resistant plants suitable for Oregon, let us know. We will research your plant and, if it fits the criteria, we will add it to the list.

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**EXTENSION SERVICE**

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### **Additional Useful Websites:**

[www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org)

[www.firefree.org](http://www.firefree.org)

[www.odf.state.or.us](http://www.odf.state.or.us)

[www.deschutesimpact.org](http://www.deschutesimpact.org)

