

Fire-wise Landscaping Still Matters!  
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As I write this article, my heart is still heavy for the people who have experienced so much loss in the infernos of Paradise, Santa Rosa, and other areas of Northern and Southern California in recent years. It is easy to feel that there is little we can do that will help our homes and ourselves, survive a wildfire. But my husband (a retired CAL FIRE chief) and I, along with assistance from other Master Gardeners, have taught classes and workshops on this topic since 2003. More than ever, we believe it is worthwhile to explore with you what actions we can take to improve the safety of our dwellings and landscapes.

Our advice falls into 3 general categories: Remove, Reduce, and Replace.

**REMOVE** through elimination of dead and dying material or other hazardous fuel sources.

**REDUCE** and space out remaining plantings to eliminate the continuous line of vegetation (both horizontally and vertically) that can serve as ladder fuels. Ladder fuels can be dry grass, shrubs, low-hanging branches or small trees which grow so close together that they allow fire to easily move up into the tops of trees, causing it to spread more quickly.

**REPLACE** by replanting selected areas or even renovating the majority of your property. In either case, there are more exciting new and sustainable plant options today than ever.

Current California law requires residents to maintain 100 feet of clearance around the house. This space is further divided into the first 30 feet, which should be kept lean, green, and clean. This means eliminate all dead plant material and fallen branches, limb up trees so that there is space between the branches and the ground, and utilize non-flammable hardscape to create a buffer around the house. In the remaining 70 feet, continue to clear, thin, and maintain the property in a way that can slow down the spread of fire in many cases. With every action we take, keep the big picture of the property and its location in mind. There is not one single right answer for everyone. Decisions must consider the slope, density, access/egress, and the surrounding parcels. House construction and materials are also a consideration.

Get informed, make a plan, and commit to taking action. Resources and assistance on this topic are more widespread than ever. One particularly helpful series is Ready-Set-Go, created by CAL FIRE, which can be found at <http://www.readyforwildfire.org/Ready-Set-Go-Campaign/>. They also have a phone app available. We encourage people to cooperate with neighbors. We used to mow part of our neighbor's property, because she was a single mom and we had the equipment that made it easier for us, than it would have been for her.

On Saturday, January 26, 2019 we will teach this year's class, "The Fire-wise and Water-wise Landscape" from 9:00 a.m. to noon at Government Center, Building C – Bldg C, located at 2850 Fair Lane Court in Placerville. Admission and parking are free.

We will also be teaching shorter workshops for other groups and organizations this winter and early spring. If you would like to be notified of those, or if you can't attend but would like the class handout that provides key points and lists extensive resources, please send an email to [mgeldorado@ucanr.edu](mailto:mgeldorado@ucanr.edu) and put my name in the subject line. You can also find previous presentations at [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public\\_Education\\_Classes/Handouts\\_-\\_Presentations/](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education_Classes/Handouts_-_Presentations/). The latest versions of our presentation and handout will be posted by the end of January.

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512). Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. Visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College – El Dorado Center. The garden is open on the second Saturday of each month, 9:00 a.m. to noon, till April 2019.

For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at [http://ucanr.edu/master\\_gardener\\_e-news](http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news). You can also find us on Facebook.