



# ORANGE COUNTY FIRE AUTHORITY

## *Vegetation Management Maintenance Guidelines For Property Owners*

CANYON

URBAN

COASTAL



**Accept Responsibility to Protect  
Yourself, Your Family, Your Property,  
and Your Community.**

[www.ocfa.org/RSG](http://www.ocfa.org/RSG)



# ***Vegetation Management Maintenance Guidelines For Property Owners***

## **CONTENTS**

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>4 R's of Vegetation Management</i>	4
<i>Spacing Guides</i>	5
<i>Mulch</i>	8
<i>Horizontal &amp; Vertical Separation</i>	9
<i>Approved Plant List</i>	10
<i>Undesirable Plant Species</i>	11
<i>Safety Tips</i>	13
<i>Frequently Asked Questions</i>	14



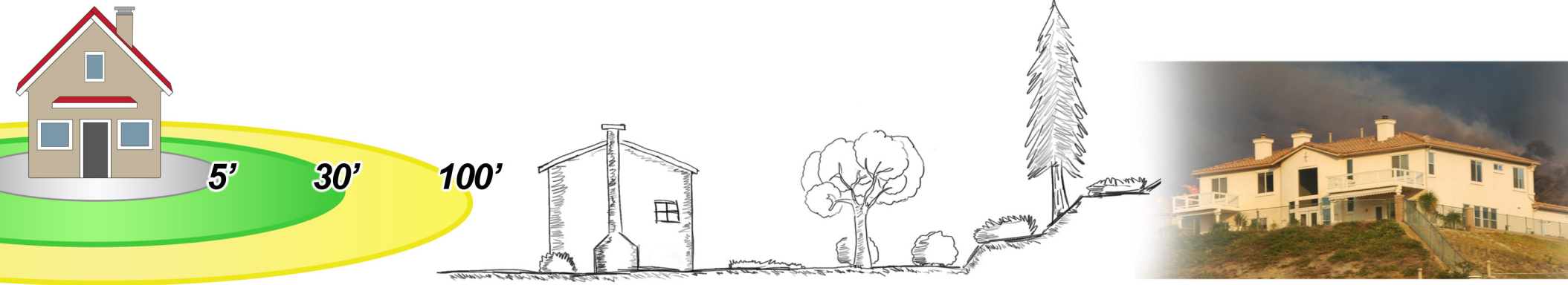
**Accept Responsibility to Protect  
Yourself, Your Family, Your Property,  
and Your Community.**

---

### **Scope:**

This guideline is intended to assist property owners with Defensible Space requirements for vegetation-covered land within 100 feet from a structure, located in a wildland fire-risk area. For interior and streetscape areas refer to the Home Owners Association Area Guidance Document.

# Introduction - IT'S UP TO YOU TO GET READY!



## Overview

The Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) understands that many of our high wildfire risk areas are also our most beautiful and, in many cases, the reason people choose to live where they do. Each year, thousands of acres of wildland and hundreds of homes are destroyed by wildfires. It is up to you, the property owner, to take responsibility for preparing your home. By applying knowledge of Vegetation Management and Home Hardening, you will be closer to ensuring your home's survivability and your family's safety. You will have also done your part in helping to make your community a safer place to live.

## Guideline Purpose

Orange County Fire Authority takes every precaution to help protect you and your property from wildfire. However, in the event of a major wildfire, firefighting resources will be stretched. Please prepare now to protect yourself, your family, and your property from a devastating wildfire by taking time to learn about Vegetation Management.

## What do I have, Defensible Space or Fuel Modification?

Vegetation Management practices are implemented and enforced in two ways. These two practices are titled Defensible Space and Fuel Modification. California Law requires that land owners in areas at risk from wildfires implement and maintain a Defensible Space landscape area between buildings and potential approaching wildfires. Since 1979, local agencies served by Orange County Fire Authority have adopted provisions in local fire codes requiring new buildings to be protected by Fuel Modification Zones. During the design and construction process, land owners and builders are required to design, implement, and maintain a landscape Fuel Modification Zone. Generally, buildings built prior to 1979 have Defensible Space and buildings built after 1979 have Fuel Modification Plans.

## What is Vegetation Management?

Vegetation Management is the controlling of plant materials year-round for the prevention of fire spread. Vegetation Management is simply removing dead and dying fuels, thinning heavy brush, and trimming trees that could contribute to a fire's spread towards your home.

## Did you know?

During a wildfire, thousands of embers can rain down on your roof and pelt the side of your home like hail during a storm. If these embers become lodged in something easily ignited on or near your house, the home will be in jeopardy of burning. Embers coming into contact with poorly maintained vegetation or combustible construction material are a major reason homes are destroyed during wildfires.

**The objective of VEGETATION MANAGEMENT is to reduce the wildfire threat to a home by changing the characteristics of the vegetation adjacent to the home.**

**Vegetation Management practices include:**

1. Increasing the moisture content of vegetation.
2. Decreasing the amount of vegetation within 100' of your house.
3. Shortening plant height, maintaining plants within 10' of a building below 2'.
4. Altering the arrangement of plants.
5. Installing plants that use less water.



## ***FOUR R's of Vegetation Management***

### ***REMOVAL:***

- Remove all dead vegetation within 100' of your home.
- Remove plants found on the undesirable plant list.

### ***REDUCTION:***

- Reduce the amount of vegetation by pruning and thinning within 100' of your home.
- Trees and shrubs need to be pruned to provide separation (see Vertical Separation Requirements).
- Shrubs over 2' can be in groups of 3 plants with a minimum spacing between groups of 15' or 3 times the tallest in the group.
- Plants within 10' of your home should be 2' or lower to reduce the flame length.
- Additional spacing may be recommended on steeper slopes.

### ***REPLACEMENT:***

- Remove highly combustible plants within 100' of your home.
- Keep in mind that if you use the recommended plants, you must still reduce the amount of plant material by thinning, per the spacing guidelines for both vertical separation and horizontal separation.
- When installing new plants make sure to plant them with spacing and mature plant size in mind.

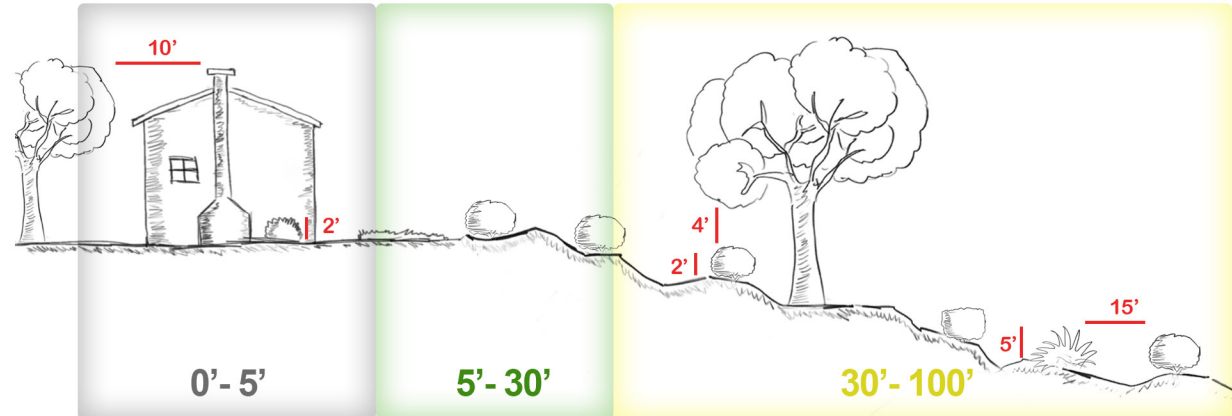
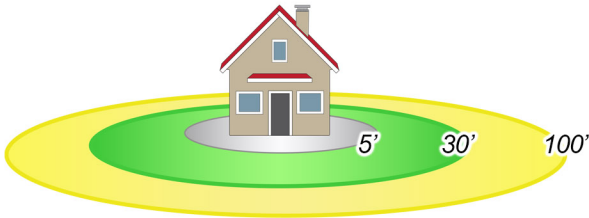
### ***RESISTANT:***

- Utilize fire resistive plants whenever possible.
- Keep in mind that if you use recommended plants, you must still reduce the amount of plant material by thinning, per the spacing guidelines for both vertical separation and horizontal separation.

# SPACING GUIDES - STRUCTURE AT TOP OF SLOPE

(See Page 9 for Horizontal and Vertical Separation Guides)

Maintenance requirements are from the home out 100' in all directions



Remove all tree branches or vegetation within 10' of chimney or stovepipe outlet.

Use hardscape like gravel, pavers, concrete and other noncombustible material. No combustible bark or mulch.

Remove all dead and dying weeds, grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches and vegetative debris (leaves, needles, cones, bark, etc.); check your roofs, gutters, decks, porches, stairways, etc.

Limit plants in this area to low growing (below 2'), nonwoody, properly watered and maintained plants. Keep plants away from windows.



HIGH RISK



LOW RISK

IMMEDIATE ZONE 0' - 5'

Limit combustible items (outdoor furniture, storage, planters, etc.).

Replace combustible fencing, gates, and arbors attached to the home with noncombustible alternatives.

Consider relocating garbage and recycling containers outside this zone.

Consider relocating boats, RVs, vehicles and other combustible items outside this zone.

Trees within 100' of your home should be kept free of dead branches and debris.

Provide vertical separation between shrubs, trees, and ground cover.

Provide horizontal separation for plants over 2' in height. Plants that are 2' or lower need no space between each other.

Maintain palm trees clear of dead fronds.



HIGH RISK



LOW RISK

5' - 30'

Remove all dead or dying plant material including dead material within vines.

Move wood piles at least 30' away from your home or to property line.

Keep annual grasses and weeds cut to below 4".

Wood fences, patio covers, and gazebos need to be free of dead vines.

If you own within this area, you must maintain the plants / trees according to the separation requirements within this document.

This area may be maintained by the homeowner association or adjacent landowner.



HIGH RISK

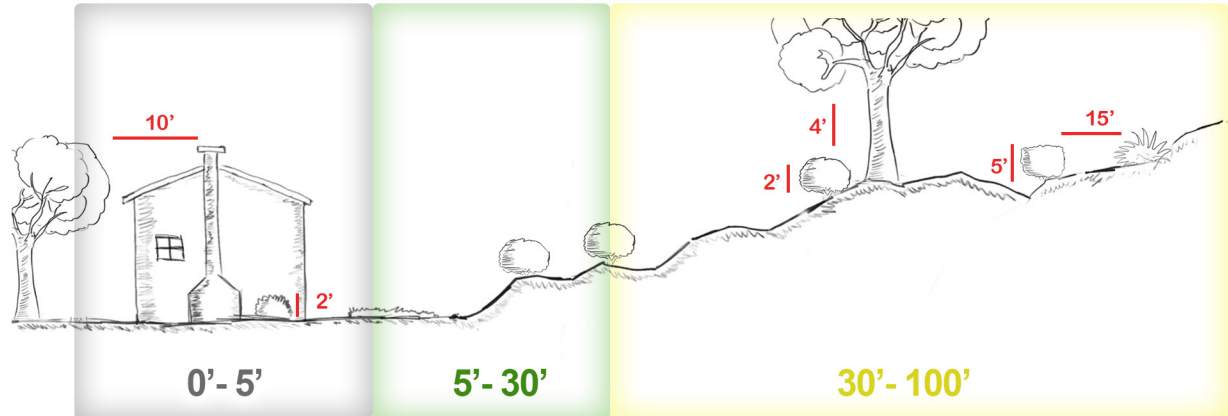
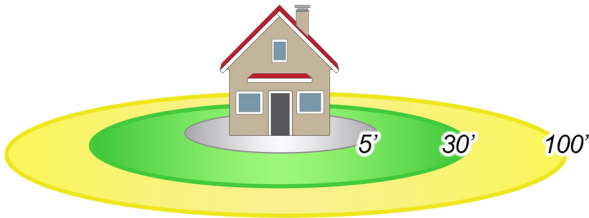


LOW RISK

30' - 100'

# SPACING GUIDES - STRUCTURE AT BOTTOM OF SLOPE (See Page 9 for Horizontal and Vertical Separation Guides)

Maintenance requirements are from the home out 100' in all directions



Remove all tree branches or vegetation within 10' of chimney or stovepipe outlet.

Use hardscape like gravel, pavers, concrete and other noncombustible material. No combustible bark or mulch.

Remove all dead and dying weeds, grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches and vegetative debris (leaves, needles, cones, bark, etc.); check your roofs, gutters, decks, porches, stairways, etc.

Limit plants in this area to low growing (below 2'), nonwoody, properly watered and maintained plants. Keep plants away from windows.



IMMEDIATE ZONE 0' - 5'

Limit combustible items (outdoor furniture, storage, planters, etc.).

Replace combustible fencing, gates, and arbors attached to the home with noncombustible alternatives.

Consider relocating garbage and recycling containers outside this zone.

Consider relocating boats, RVs, vehicles and other combustible items outside this zone.

Trees within 100' of your home should be kept free of dead branches and debris.

Provide vertical separation between shrubs, trees, and ground cover.

Provide horizontal separation for plants over 2' in height. Plants that are 2' or lower need no space between each other.

Maintain palm trees clear of dead fronds.



5' - 30'

Remove all dead or dying plant material including dead material within vines.

Move wood piles at least 30' away from your home or to property line.

Keep annual grasses and weeds cut to below 4".

Wood fences, patio covers, and gazebos need to be free of dead vines.

If you own within this area, you must maintain the plants / trees according to the separation requirements within this document.

This area may be maintained by the homeowner association or adjacent landowner.

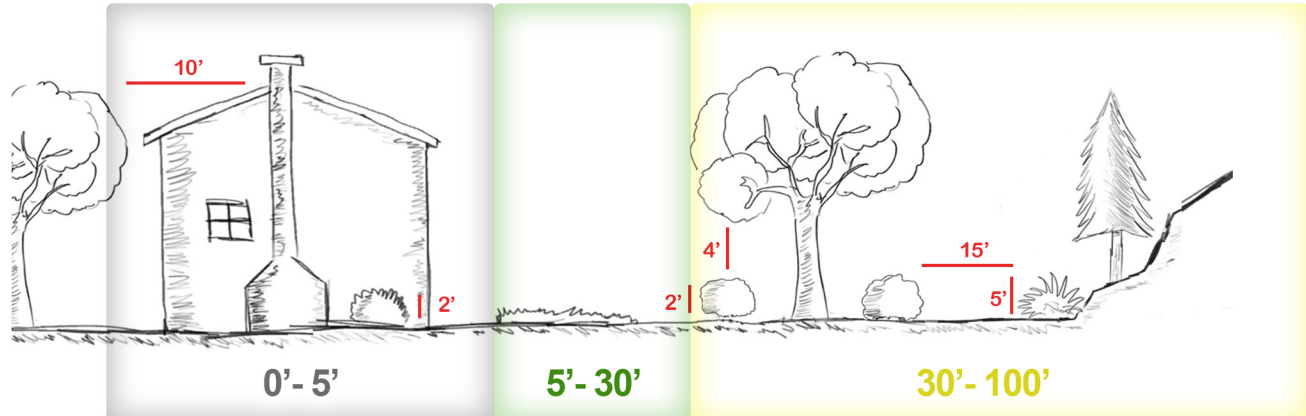
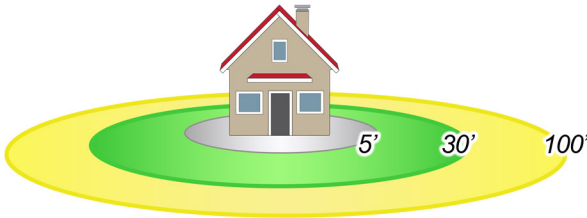


30' - 100'

# SPACING GUIDES - STRUCTURE WITH NO SLOPE

(See Page 9 for Horizontal and Vertical Separation Guides)

Maintenance requirements are from the home out 100' in all directions



Remove all tree branches or vegetation within 10' of chimney or stovepipe outlet.

Use hardscape like gravel, pavers, concrete and other noncombustible material. No combustible bark or mulch.

Remove all dead and dying weeds, grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches and vegetative debris (leaves, needles, cones, bark, etc.); check your roofs, gutters, decks, porches, stairways, etc.

Limit plants in this area to low growing (below 2'), nonwoody, properly watered and maintained plants. Keep plants away from windows.



Limit combustible items (outdoor furniture, storage, planters, etc.).

Replace combustible fencing, gates, and arbors attached to the home with noncombustible alternatives.

Consider relocating garbage and recycling containers outside this zone.

Consider relocating boats, RVs, vehicles and other combustible items outside this zone.



IMMEDIATE ZONE 0' - 5'

Trees within 100' of your home should be kept free of dead branches and debris.

Provide vertical separation between shrubs, trees, and ground cover.

Provide horizontal separation for plants over 2' in height. Plants that are 2' or lower need no space between each other.

Maintain palm trees clear of dead fronds.



Remove all dead or dying plant material including dead material within vines.

Move wood piles at least 30' away from your home or to property line.

Keep annual grasses and weeds cut to below 4".

Wood fences, patio covers, and gazebos need to be free of dead vines.



5' - 30'

If you own within this area, you must maintain the plants / trees according to the separation requirements within this document.

This area may be maintained by the homeowner association or adjacent landowner.



30' - 100'

# Recommended Application of Mulch and Wood Chips

## Justification

Landscape areas with mulch and wood chips create an ember receptive bed of fuel which, when not created or maintained correctly will contribute to direct flame contact and ignition of structures. The purpose of this proposed ordinance is to minimize the risk to structures during a wildland fire event. This will be accomplished by setting parameters for the application of organic mulch and wood chips around structures.

## Wood Chips

Wood chips shall be derived from trees only. Wood chips shall not be derived from hazardous brush including, but not limited to, sage, coyote brush or chamise (undesirable plant material). Chips should average 2 – 4 inches in length. Fine, ground, stringy types of material which can ignite faster and burn more readily shall not be used. These materials include, but are not limited to, Gorilla Hair (shredded redwood or western red cedar), Pine straw, and Coconut fiber. Wood chips are not required to be composted prior to application.

## General Rule of Application

Landscape areas with mulch, if not created and maintained properly will contribute to fire spread during a wildfire and act as an ember receptive ignition source. To address concerns and issues associated with fires starting in or spreading from mulch and wood chips spread around structures, the basic safety measures of this section shall be followed in areas of wildfire risk areas.

## Responsibility

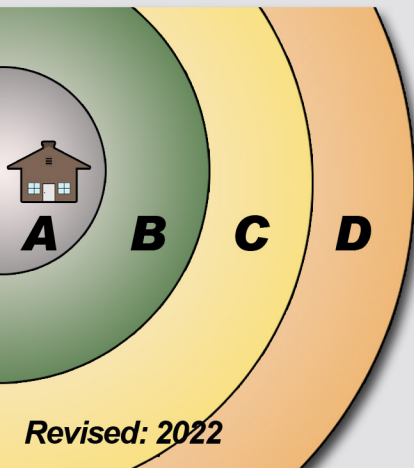
Organic mulch and wood chips consisting of invasive species, hazardous trees, non-native vegetation, pine needles, leaves, grass and in-organic flammable materials, such as shredded rubber, are not recommended within wildfire risk areas.

## Maximum Depth of Application

The application and spread depth shall not exceed 4 inches in depth within wildfire risk areas.

## Limitations

Application within required wildfire risk areas shall be in accordance with the table below.

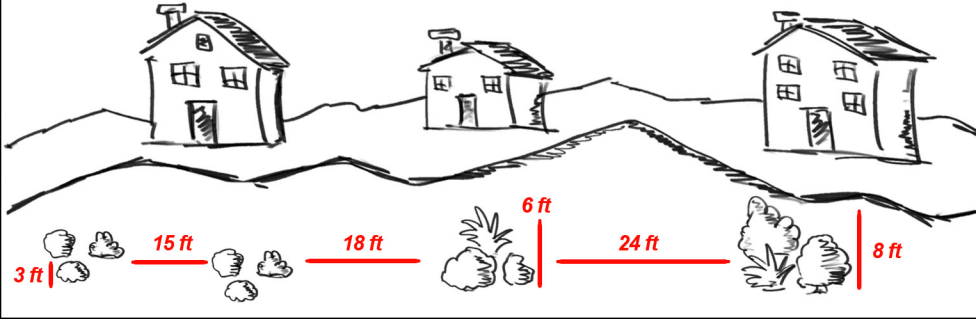


<i>Distance from Structure</i>	<i>Application</i>
A 0 - 5 feet	Application prohibited. Must use non-combustible materials such as gravel, decomposed granite, etc. Keep combustible mulch and wood chips away from combustible fencing, decks, gazebos, play equipment, sheds, patio covers, and trellises.
B > 5 - 30 feet	Limited non-continuous use of organic mulch is allowed. Use a mosaic (non-uniform) pattern with a maximum application area of 20 feet x 20 feet and a minimum 5-foot separation.
C > 30 - 100 feet	Organic mulch and wood chips allowed. No limitation on application areas.
D > 100 feet	Same as > 30 - 100 feet or as determined by Fire Code Official if additional wildfire risk areas is required for the parcel beyond 100 feet

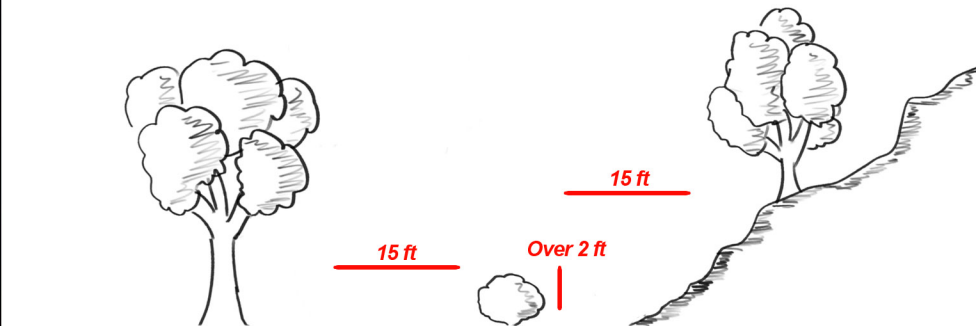


## HORIZONTAL SEPARATION

All shrubs greater than 2 feet in height shall be in a maximum grouping of 3 plants and separated by a distance of 3 times the height of the tallest shrub in the group or 15 feet, whichever is greater.

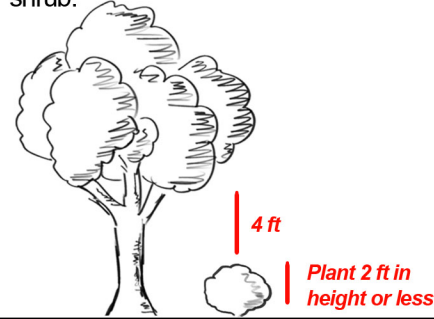


Shrubs greater than 2 feet in height shall be no closer than 15 feet from the edge of the tree canopy(s) measured horizontally.



## VERTICAL SEPARATION

Trees require vertical separation of 4 feet between the plant material/ground and the lowest branch of the tree or shrub.



## FIRE ACCESS ROAD

Maintain vertical clearance of 13 feet 6 inches and 10 feet of vegetation clearance from edge of roadway or curb line on all fire access roads.



Remove any portion of a tree within 10 feet of a chimney or stovepipe. All dead and dying plant material shall be removed.



**Property owners with vegetative-covered land shall comply with the following guidelines within 100 feet of a structure or to the property line:**

- Dead and dying vegetation shall be removed, including leaf litter on the roof.
- Grasses shall be cut to four inches and the cut material removed on an annual basis.
- Volunteer trees and saplings shall be removed allowing for mature tree spacing.
- When trees and shrubs are arranged for screening purposes, shrub removal may be necessary.

### HORIZONTAL SPACING

- Shrubs greater than two feet in height shall be in a maximum grouping of three plants and separated by a distance of three times the height of the tallest shrub in the group or 15 feet, whichever is greater.
- Shrubs greater than two feet in height shall be no closer than 15 feet from the edge of the tree canopy(s) measured horizontally.

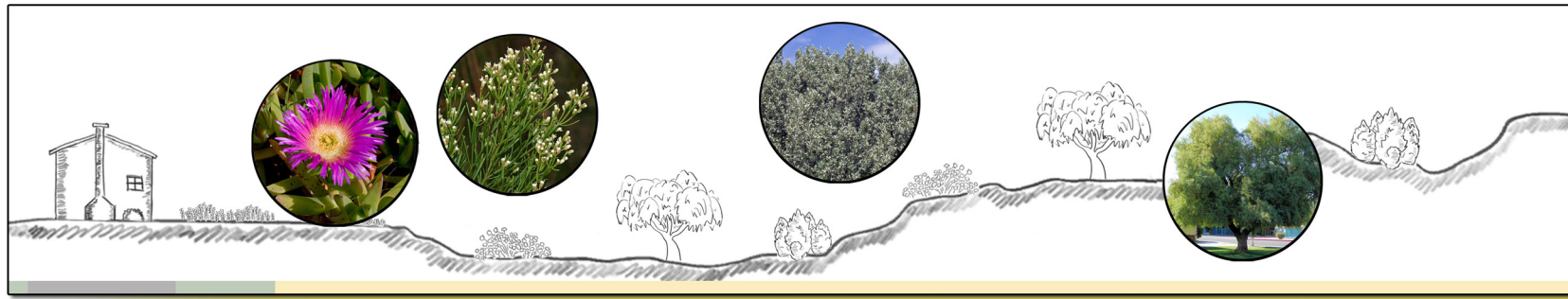
### VERTICAL SEPERATION

- Trees require vertical separation of four feet between plant material or ground and the lowest branches of the tree.
- Ground covers shall be maintained at no more than two feet.

# APPROVED PLANT LIST



5' 30' 100'



## TREES

## SHRUBS

- Prickly Pear
- Prostrate Coprosma
- Purple Needlegrass
- Purple Nightshade
- Puya
- Red Apple Aptenia
- Red Hot Poker
- Red Yucca
- Redondo Creeper
- Rosea Ice Plant
- Rush Rose
- Salt Heliotrope
- San Miguel Savory
- Sea Fig Ice Plant
- Sea Lavender
- Shaw's Century Plant
- Show Evening Primrose
- Showy Fairwell to Spring
- Showy Gilia
- Sky Lupine
- Snow-in-Summer
- South African Daisy (Gazania)
- Spider Lupine
- Spiny Rush
- Spring Cinquefoil
- Sunrose
- Trailing Ice Plant
- Training African Daisy
- Training Gazania
- Training Ice Plant
- Verbena
- Western Vervain
- White Trailing Ice Plant
- Wild Snapdragon
- Wild Strawberry/ Sand Strawberry
- Winter Creeper Euonymus
- Wishbone Bush
- Woolly Plantain
- Yankee Point
- Yucca
- Zorro Annual Fescue
- Hall's Japanese Honeysuckle

- African Sumac
- \*American Sweet Gum
- \*Big Leaf Maple
- California Black Walnut
- California Laurel
- California Sycamore
- Carob
- Chinese Pistache
- Citrus
- \*Coast Live Oak
- \*Coral Tree
- \*Cork Oak
- \*Crape Myrtle
- \*Engelmann Oak
- Fernleaf Ironwood
- Firewheel Tree
- Italian Alder
- Loquat
- Macadamia Nut
- Maidenhair Tree
- Mayten Tree
- Mexican Elderberry
- \*Mexican Palo Verde
- New Zealand Christmas Tree
- Primrose Tree
- Strawberry Tree
- Tulip Tree
- Victorian Box
- \*Western Cottonwood
- \*White Alder

- Pink Rockrose
- Aaron's Beard
- Australian Tea Tree
- Autums Sage
- Big Pod Ceanothus
- Bladderpod
- Blue Hibiscus
- Blue Stemmed Bush Penstemon
- Boobyalla
- Bougainvillea
- Brewer Saltbush
- Bush Morning Glory
- Bush Poppy
- Bush Snapdragon
- Bushrue (Bush Rue)
- California Coffee Berry
- California Encelia
- Loquat
- California Flannelbush
- California Scrub Oak
- Carmel Creeper Ceanothus
- Carolina Cherry Laurel
- Chaparral Bloom
- Chapparal Mallow
- Chapparal Nolina
- Coastal Goldenbush
- Coastal Scrub Oak
- Common Yarrow
- Creeping Snowberry
- Deerweed
- Douglas Nightshade
- Eastwood Manzanita
- Emory Baccharis
- Evergreen Currant
- Firethorn
- Four-Wing Saltbush
- French Lavender

- Fuschia Flowering Gooseberry
- Golden Abundance Oregon Grape
- Golden Currant
- Green Bark Ceanothus
- Green Lavender Cotton
- Greensphere Manzanita
- Heart Leaved Penstemon
- Holly Leafed Cherry
- Hollyleaf Redberry
- Hopseed Bush
- Indian Hawthorne
- Italian Buckthorn
- Lemonade Berry
- Louis Edmunds Ceanothus
- Matilija Poppy
- Mexican Grasstree
- Monterey Carpet Manzanita
- \*Mulefat
- Nevin Mahonia
- Oleander
- Orchid Rockrose
- Pineapple Guava
- Pink Melaleuca
- Plumbago Cape
- Point Reyes Ceanothus
- Pomegranate
- Redberry
- Refugio Manzanita
- Sageleaf Rockrose
- \*Shiny Xylosma
- Siltassel
- Silverberry
- Squaw Carpet Ceanothus
- Star Jasmine
- Star-Lower

- Sugarbush
- Summer Holly
- Sweet Hakea
- Sweet Olive
- Texas privet
- Texas Ranger
- Thick Leaf Yerba Santa
- Toyon
- Trailing Lantana
- Tree Aloe
- Wart-Stem Ceanothus
- Western False Indigobush
- Western Redbud
- White Cloud Matilija Poppy
- White Flowering Currant
- White Rockrose
- Wild Honeysuckle
- Woolly Blue Curls
- Woolly Yarrow
- Yellow Bells
- Yellow Bush Penstemon
- Yellow Sage

**HIGH RISK**



**LOW RISK**



\*Denotes the plant species susceptible to Invasive Shot Hole Borers (ISHB).

## Undesirable Plant Species (Target Species)

The plants listed below are more susceptible to burning, due to rough or peeling bark, production of large amounts of litter, vegetation that contains oils, resin, wax, or pitch, large amounts of dead material in the plant, or plantings with a high dead to live fuel ratio. Many of these species, if existing on the property and adequately maintained (pruning, thinning, irrigation, litter removal, and weeding), may remain as long as the potential for spreading a fire has been reduced or eliminated. Some of these plants may be considered undesirable because of their ability to naturalize and become a pest. These types of plants should be avoided, especially in sensitive riparian or coastal areas where they could become established and compete with native vegetation.

**Arborvitae**



**Chamise**



**Artichoke Thistle /  
Wild Artichoke**



**Cypress**



**Black Mustard**



**Eucalyptus**



**Black Sage**



**Fountain Grass**



**Buckwheat**



**Horseweed**



**Burning Nettle**



**Indian Tobacco**



**California Sagebrush**



**Juniper**



**Castor Bean Plant**



**Mayweed**



# Undesirable Plant Species (Target Species) CONTINUED

**Milk Thistle**



**Red Shanks**



**Mexican Feather Grass**



**Russian Thistle /  
Tumbleweed**



**Palms (all species)**



**Salt Cedar /  
Tamarisk**



**Pampas Grass**



**Telegraph Plant**



**Peppergrass/  
Hoary Cress**



**Tree Tobacco**



**Pine Tree**



**Wild Turnip /  
Yellow Mustard**



**Prickly Lettuce**



# Safety Tips For Getting Ready

## Things To Think About When Thinning Vegetation

When working with hand tools it is best to have personal protection, which includes proper long-sleeved clothing, gloves, hardhat, boots, eye protection, and noise protection equipment. The sharpest tools are best, since dull tools cause more accidents due to worker fatigue and frustration. Saws, loppers, and other cutting tools should be handled carefully and never put into anything except the wood they are to cut. When people work together they can get in each other's way, so it is best to work separated by at least two lengths of the vegetation reach. Thus, if you are cutting out 6 foot tall shrubs, you should be working at least 12 feet apart.



Often, having one person cutting and one or more people pulling the cut brush to a pile works most productively and safely. Piles should have vegetation laid parallel for later ease of handling. Working with power tools means having another person present and having greater communication so that all understand what the course of work is going to be. If someone tries to engage you in conversation while you are working with a chainsaw or other power tools, stop the equipment if you need to respond. Distractions can cause injury. Working safely means having fire extinguishers and first aid help close by the work site.

Cutting of large trees (larger than 8 inch stump diameter) needs skill and know-how. These trees can weigh over half a ton and can crush cars and things of value. Someone skilled with a chainsaw and full safety gear needs to do the actual work and often needs other ground assistance. This cutting should not be done without planning and forethought. Certified arborists are available for this kind of work and getting bids from licensed and insured contractors generally ensures the best value. Be sure to specify what you want the finished site to look like before work begins.

## Stop the Start of a Wildfire!

- Use tools with non-metallic blades to eliminate sparks.
- Have a garden hose available and turned on while operating all power tools.
- Dispose of cuttings and debris promptly to reduce the amount of fuel on property.
- Do not park cars in tall grass. The hot catalytic converter can ignite dry plant materials.
- Do not cut during a red flag warning or dry windy day.
- Spark arresters are required on gasoline, diesel, and propane-powered engines.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

***What is Defensible Space?***

Defensible Space is an area between your house and an oncoming wildfire, where the vegetation has been controlled, trimmed, or removed to reduce wildfire threat from embers, flames, and intense heat.

***What is Fuel Modification?***

Fuel Modification is a planned landscape design that reduces the threat of wildfire, by creating a fire-resistant divider between homes that are adjacent to areas of natural plant life.

***What is the relationship between vegetation and wildfire threat?***

Many people do not view the plants growing on their property as a threat. But in terms of wildfire, what is growing adjacent to your home can have considerable influence upon its survivability. All vegetation, including naturally occurring native plants and ornamental plants in the residential landscape, is potential fuel for a wildfire. If the vegetation is properly spaced and maintained, a wildfire can be slowed down, the flame lengths are reduced, and the amount of heat reduced, all of which contribute to your house surviving a wildfire.

***Why is Defensible Space necessary? Won't the fire department protect my house?***

Some individuals incorrectly assume that a fire truck will be parked in their driveway and firefighters will be actively defending their home when a wildfire approaches. During a major wildfire, it is unlikely that there will be fire fighting resources available to defend your home. Even with adequate resources, some wildfires may be so intense that there may be little that firefighters can do to prevent your house from burning. The key is to reduce fire intensity as a wildfire nears your house. This can be accomplished by reducing the amount of flammable vegetation surrounding your home.

***Does Defensible Space require a lot of bare ground around the house?***

NO. While bare ground would certainly provide effective Defensible Space, it's unnecessary and unattractive. Bare ground may also cause soil to erode. Many homes have yards with both effective Defensible Space and attractive landscapes with little or no bare ground.

***Does creating Defensible Space require special skills or equipment?***

NO. For the most part, creating Defensible Space requires routine gardening and landscape maintenance practices such as pruning, mowing, weeding, plant removal, appropriate plant selection, and irrigation. The necessary equipment consists of common tools like a chain saw, pruning saw, pruning shears, shovel, and rake. Pay close attention to sparks this equipment may generate. Try not to do this maintenance during hot and windy weather.

***How big is an effective Defensible Space?***

Defensible Space size is usually expressed as the distance from your house in which vegetation is managed to reduce the wildfire threat. The necessary distance for effective Defensible Space is not the same for everyone, but varies by slope and type of vegetation growing near your house, at a minimum distance of 100' from the structure. Visit [ocfa.org/RSG](http://ocfa.org/RSG) to schedule an OCFA representative to come out and go over any special conditions associated with your house.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

***Does having Defensible Space guarantee my home will survive a wildfire?***

NO. Under extreme conditions, almost any house can burn. Having Defensible Space along with a good Hardened Home will significantly improve the odds of your home surviving a wildfire.

***Why doesn't everyone living in a high wildfire hazard area create Defensible Space?***

The specific reasons for not creating Defensible Space are varied. Some individuals believe that "it won't happen to my family." Others think the cost of maintenance outweighs the benefits. Some have failed to implement Defensible Space practices because of lack of knowledge. For those individuals wanting to learn more about Defensible Space and how to harden their homes, please go to [ocfa.org/RSG](http://ocfa.org/RSG).

***Does having an effective Defensible Space make a difference?***

YES. Homes with effective Defensible Space are much more likely to survive a wildfire. Furthermore, Hardened Homes (go to [ocfa.org/RSG](http://ocfa.org/RSG)) with effective Defensible Space have an even greater chance to survive a wildfire than homes where no wildfire preparations have been taken.

***What should I do to make my property Defensible?***

Remove all tree branches or vegetation within 10' of chimney outlet.  
Trees within 100' of your home or neighbor's home should be kept free of dead branches and debris.  
Provide vertical clearance between shrubs and trees. Clearance may need to increase on steeper slopes.  
Provide horizontal separation for plants over 2' in height.  
Keep palm trees clear of dead fronds. Palm trees are not recommended within 100' of your home.  
Remove all dead or dying plant material including dead material within vines.  
Move wood piles at least 30' away from your home or to property line.  
Keep annual grasses and weeds cut to 4".  
Wood fences, patio covers, and gazebos need to be free of dead vines.  
It is *recommended* that you keep all shrubs within 10' of your home 2' or lower and keep plants away from windows.

***Why Vegetation Management?***

In the event of a catastrophic wildfire, the fire department may not have the resources to protect your home. Wildfires fueled by dry vegetation and driven by hot, dry winds are extremely dangerous and impossible to control. Many residents have built their homes and landscaped in fire-prone areas without fully understanding the impact a fire could have on them. Wildland-urban fire emergency strategy and tactics differ from both the standard wildland and the standard urban fire suppression practices. Wildland fire suppression largely attempts to keep a fire from spreading beyond its current location. Urban fire suppression initially addresses life safety (principally building occupants) and then fire containment within a portion of the structure and/or prevents adjacent structure involvement. Neither wildland nor urban suppression practices typically provide for home ignition potential reduction given an encroaching wildfire.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## *What can you do?*

The success of this program and more importantly, its ability to reduce the high probability of fatalities and multiple structure loss, depends upon each property owner's aggressive participation in maintaining vegetation around their property. It's not a question of "if" but "when" the next major wildfire will occur in Orange County. That's why the most important person in protecting your life and property is not the firefighter, but you. Through advance planning and preparation, we can all be ready for wildfire. We hope you find the tips included in this publication helpful in creating heightened situational awareness and a fire safe environment for you and your family. For more information visit our website at [ocfa.org/RSG](http://ocfa.org/RSG).

