

FireSmart Landscaping



Protecting your home

In British Columbia, wildfires are a natural ecosystem process. As homes are built and neighborhoods develop at the boundary between wildland and urban areas, it is important for homeowners to take precautions to protect themselves and their property. Making FireSmart choices when selecting plants for your yard and when landscaping can help you create a defensible space around your home. A “defensible space” is the area between your home and other structures, in which potential fuels have been modified to reduce the possibility of ignition. FireSmart guidelines suggest that the 10-meter radius around your home should be a fire-resistant zone, free of materials that could easily ignite from a wildfire.

What is FireSmart landscaping?

There are four components of a FireSmart landscape:

- **Choosing fire-resistant plants**
- **Avoiding fire-prone plants**
- **Plant placement and spacing**
- **FireSmart yard maintenance**

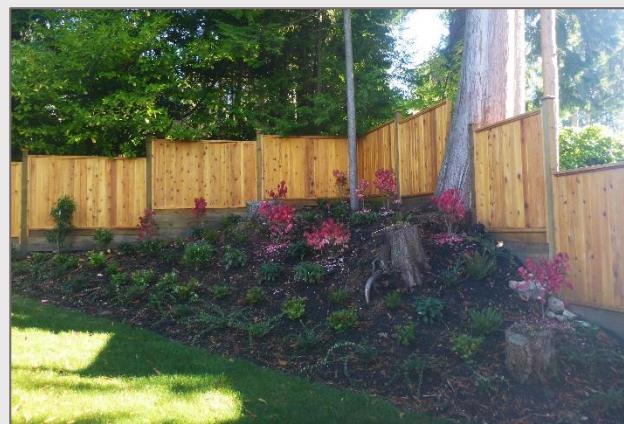
This guide lists a selection of fire-resistant plants to choose, and fire-prone plants to avoid. It is recommended to plant in low densities, and to space shrubs away from trees to avoid creating ladder fuels. Yard maintenance is an important part of reducing hazardous fuel accumulations. Practices that can be incorporated into a regular maintenance schedule include removing needle litter and woody debris, pruning tree branches less than three meters from the ground, and mowing sod-forming grasses to 10 centimeters in height during the fire season (April to October).



What are fire-resistant plants?

Fire-resistant plants are those that do not easily ignite from wildfire flames or embers, and do not easily spread fire to nearby fuels. Plants that are fire-resistant have the following characteristics:

- **Leaves are moist and supple**
- **Have deciduous or broadleaf evergreen foliage**
- **Plant produces watery sap, with no strong odor**
- **Plant does not produce viscous sap or resin**



What are fire-prone plants?

Plants that are highly flammable often have the following characteristics:

- **Leaves or needles are aromatic (have a strong odor when crushed)**
- **Accumulations of dry, dead material**
- **Plant produces gummy sap, or resin**
- **Plant has loose, papery, or flakey bark**

Fire Resistant Trees

(trees in bold are native species)

<10m tall

Acer circinatum	vine maple
<i>Acer ginnala</i>	amur maple
Acer glabrum	Douglas maple
<i>Albizia julibrissin</i>	silk tree
<i>Carpinus japonicus</i>	Japanese hornbeam
<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	redbud
<i>Cornus florida</i>	pink dogwood
Crataegus douglasii	black hawthorn
<i>Halesia carolina</i>	Carolina silverbell
<i>Hamamelis x intermedia</i>	witch hazel
<i>Magnolia sieboldii</i>	Oyama magnolia
Magnolia stellata	star magnolia
<i>Magnolia x soulangeana</i>	saucer magnolia
<i>Oxydendrum arboreum</i>	sourwood
<i>Parrotia persica</i>	Persian ironwood
<i>Styrax japonicus</i>	Japanese snowbell
<i>Syringa reticulata 'Ivory Silk'</i>	Japanese tree lilac

10-20m tall

<i>Acer negundo</i>	Manitoba maple
<i>Cercidiphyllum japonicum</i>	katsura
<i>Cornus 'Eddie's White Wonder'</i>	Eddie's White Wonder dogwood
<i>Davidia involucrata</i>	dove tree
<i>Fraxinus nigra</i>	black ash
<i>Fraxinus ornus</i>	flowering ash
<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	American sweetgum
<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	black gum
<i>Salix babylonica</i>	weeping willow
<i>Stewartia japonica</i>	Japanese stewartia

>20m tall

Acer macrophyllum	big-leaf maple
Alnus rubra	red alder
<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	hornbeam
<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	green ash
<i>Ginkgo biloba</i>	maidenhair (male)
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	tulip tree
<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	southern magnolia
<i>Tilia cordata</i>	little leaf linden
<i>Ulmus americana</i>	American elm
<i>Zelkova serrata</i>	Japanese zelkova



Fire Prone Trees

<i>Cedrus sp.</i>	cedar
<i>Chamaecyparis sp.</i>	cypress
<i>Abies sp.</i>	fir
<i>Juniperus sp.</i>	juniper
<i>Larix sp.</i>	larch
<i>Picea sp.</i>	spruce
<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>	Douglas-fir
<i>Sequoiadendron sp.</i>	redwood
<i>Taxus sp.</i>	yew
<i>Thuja sp.</i>	cedar
<i>Tsuga sp.</i>	hemlock



Cypress



Douglas-fir



Western redcedar

Fire Resistant Shrubs

(Species in bold are native species)

Deciduous species

<2m tall

<i>Abelia x grandiflora</i>	glossy abelia
<i>Fothergilla gardenii</i>	dwarf fothergilla
<i>Fuchsia magellanica</i>	hardy fuchsia
<i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i>	oakleaf hydrangea
<i>Myrica gale</i>	sweet gale
<i>Paeonia suffruticosa</i>	tree peony
<i>Potentilla sp.</i>	cinquefoil
<i>Spirea douglasii</i>	hardhack
<i>Spirea sp.</i>	spirea *
<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	snowberry



2-5m tall

<i>Callicarpa bodinieri</i>	beautyberry
<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	summersweet
<i>Euonymus alatus</i>	burning bush *
<i>Forsythia x intermedia</i>	forsythia *
<i>Hamamelis mollis</i>	Chinese witch hazel
<i>Hibiscus syriacus</i>	rose of Sharon *
<i>Holodiscus discolor</i>	oceanspray
<i>Hydrangea paniculata</i>	pee gee hydrangea
<i>Kolkwitzia amabilis</i>	beautybush
<i>Menziesia ferruginea</i>	false azalea
<i>Philadelphus lewisii</i>	mock orange
<i>Rhododendron occidentale</i>	western azalea



>5m tall

<i>Salix discolor</i>	pussy willow
<i>Salix hookeriana</i>	Hooker's willow
<i>Salix scouleriana</i>	mountain willow



*compliant hedging



Evergreen species

<2m tall

<i>Buxus microphylla</i>	Asian boxwood *
<i>Choisya ternata</i>	Mexican mock orange *
<i>Hebe sp.</i>	hebe
<i>Ilex crenata</i>	Japanese holly
<i>Paxistima myrsinites</i>	false box
<i>Pieris japonica</i>	Japanese pieris
<i>Rhododendron impeditum</i>	impeditum rhodo
<i>Rhododendron sp.</i>	rhodos and azaleas *
<i>Sarcococca sp.</i>	sweetbox *
<i>Skimmia japonica</i>	skimmia *
<i>Viburnum davidii</i>	David viburnum *
<i>Weigela florida</i>	weigela *

2-5m tall

<i>Aucuba japonica</i>	Japanese laurel
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	boxwood *
<i>Camellia sasanqua</i>	sasanqua camellia
<i>Ceanothus thyrsiflorus</i>	California lilac *
<i>Fatsia japonica</i>	fatsia
<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	mountain laurel
<i>Laurus nobilis</i>	bay laurel
<i>Ligustrum japonicum</i>	wax-leaved privet *
<i>Osmanthus x burkwoodii</i>	Burkwood osmanthus
<i>Photinia x fraserii</i>	Fraser photinia *
<i>Viburnum plicatum</i>	Japanese snowball *
<i>Viburnum rhytidophyllum</i>	leatherleaf viburnum *

>5m tall

<i>Myrica californica</i>	Pacific wax myrtle
<i>Rhododendron macrophyllum</i>	Pacific rhododendron



Planting Guidelines

Choosing trees and shrubs

- When selecting shrubs, choose compact and well-proportioned plants, with full, healthy tops.
- When selecting trees, chose straight specimens with no visible defects and healthy crowns.
- Avoid plants with signs of decay, girdling, abrasions, or signs of diseases or pests.
- Although it is desirable to have plants that are drought-tolerant ("waterwise" plants), some plants with these qualities are not fire resistant. Choose fire-resistant or FireSmart plants.
- Watering restrictions are often in place during the summer. Consider that you may need to water your plants by hand with a spring-loaded nozzle.

Planting trees and shrubs

- Plants must not be placed within 1.5m of any building. Be sure to space trees and large shrubs 4-5m apart.
- You can add organic matter (e.g. peat moss, manure, compost) to improve soil health. Choose soil amendments free of sawdust, stones, sticks, roots, or invasive plant material.
- Prepare the plants by soaking them, then removing pots or burlap & twine. Break up dense clumps of roots with your hand and cut or remove any girdling roots. Remove all tags, twine and flagging tape from the plant.
- Dig a planting pit as deep as the root ball and twice as wide as the root ball. Set the plant in the hole so that the top of the root ball is 2-5cm above grade.
- Carefully tamp down growing material around roots and water deeply immediately after planting.
- Avoid pruning newly planted trees and shrubs – only remove dead, diseased, or very damaged branches.
- Newly planted trees do not require staking except in locations with very strong winds or with large trees that require extra support. In these cases, be careful to avoid staking through the rootball. Use a soft material to tie the tree to the stake and ensure it is loose enough that the tree can move around. Stakes should be removed after one year.

Caring for your garden

- Bark mulches are highly combustible; do not use them within 10 meters of your home. Try substituting with well-rotted compost or stones.
- Do not allow dead plant material to accumulate on the property. Yard clean up should be done monthly through the growing season (April-October).
- Pruning may be required to prevent plants from growing too close to the house and to remove ladder fuels. The bottom branches of coniferous trees must be kept a minimum of 2m from the ground.

