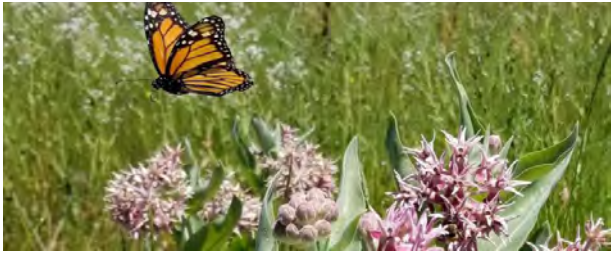


GARDEN AS IF LIFE DEPENDS ON IT!

Home landscapes provide many critical ecosystem services including:

- **Food, shelter, and other habitat resources** for many species of birds, pollinators, and other wildlife.



- **Nurturing soil** by protecting it from erosion and feeding soil organisms with leaf litter. Healthy soil allows vigorous root growth, nutrient cycling, and water absorption.



- **Water filtration and conservation** with detention basins to collect stormwater and allow it to sink into the soil.



Credit: April Owens

The goal of the Resilient Landscapes Coalition is to encourage fire-wise landscape design and management in the defensible space zone, while at the same time enhancing biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and conserving resources.

The Coalition formed for several reasons:

- **To ensure** that wildlife habitat and biodiversity are protected and enhanced while meeting County and State code requirements and fire-wise recommendations within the defensible space zone.
- **To promote** sustainable practices to save energy and water.
- **To provide** specific design and plant selection recommendations at different distances from the house, encouraging the use of native plants, and identifying native plant communities as the framework for plant selection.
- **To highlight** the importance of working as a community to be fire-wise, sustainable, and to protect and enhance wildlife habitat.
- **To engage** the fire-protection community along with the environmental communities to create an integrated and holistic message.

THE RESILIENT LANDSCAPES COALITION PARTNERSHIP



VISIT US!



SonomaResilientLandscapes.com

With funding from the Sonoma County Vegetation Management Grant Program



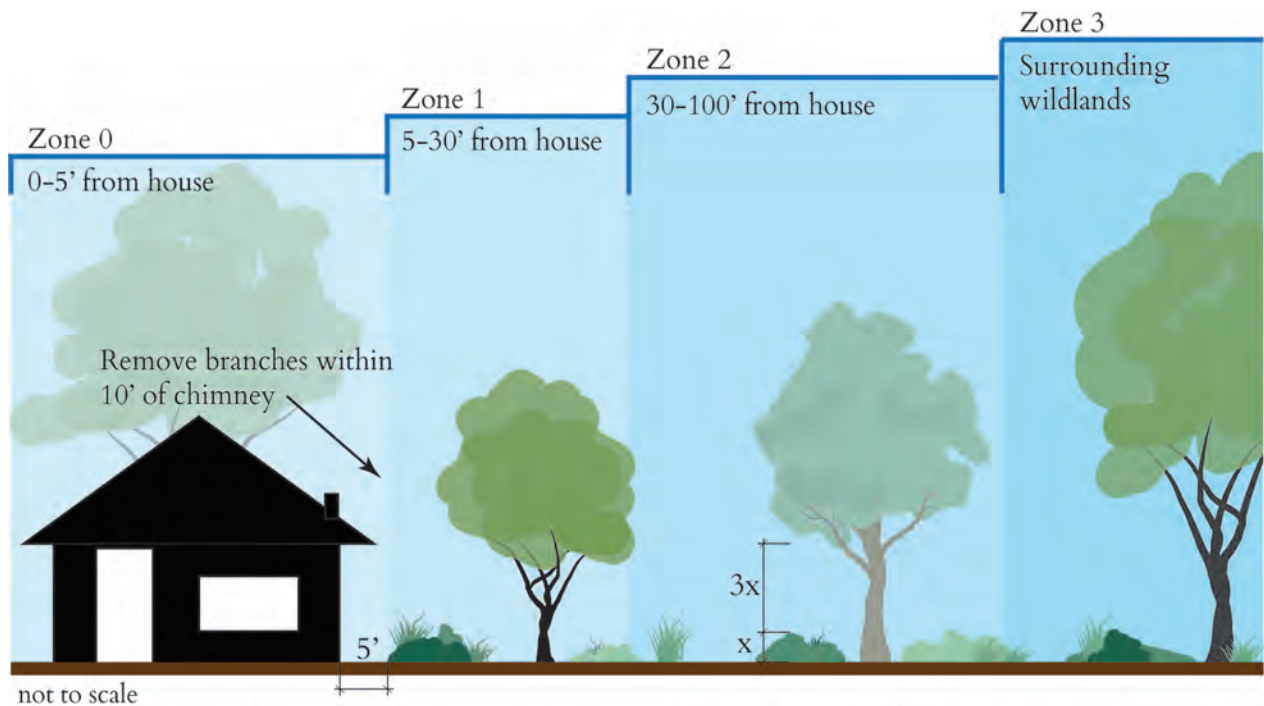
RESILIENT LANDSCAPES COALITION



Credit: April Owens

A GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE DEFENSIBLE SPACE

SonomaResilientLandscapes.com



not to scale

Zone 0: Flying embers are the primary cause of structure fires during a wildfire; start your work here!

- Within 5' of the house, optimally eliminate all vegetation. Any plants that do remain should be well maintained and adequately hydrated. Clean up all fallen leaves and needles regularly.
- Use only non-combustible inorganic mulches such as gravel. This is also a good area for brick or concrete walkways. Replace natural fiber doormats with heavy rubber mats or metal grates.
- Remove combustible materials: trash containers, lumber and firewood, patio furniture and clutter.
- Overhead trees are fine, but assure that they're healthy and free of dead wood. Maintain a distance of 5' from the roof and 10' from the chimney. Maintaining the roof and gutters free of debris is critical!

Zone 1: Clusters of plants divided by hardscape can slow the path of fire.

- Think "islands" or groupings of low, preferably native plants separated by non-combustible materials such as gravel paths, patios, and landscape features utilizing cobble and rock.
- The space between clusters of plants should be at least twice the height of the adjacent plants.
- Avoid "ladder fuels", lower vegetation that allows fire to climb to the canopy of trees and large shrubs. Create a vertical distance to the lowest tree branches of 3x the height of the understory plants, a minimum of 6' or 1/3 the height of smaller trees. Increase this vertical spacing on slopes.
- Use arbor mulch to 3" deep in planting areas to help maintain them adequately hydrated and healthy.

Zone 2: Transitioning to the broader landscape, continue to provide horizontal and vertical spacing.

- Larger plants and more extensive plant islands will increase habitat and benefit wildlife.
- Remove flammable invasive plants in all zones.

Zone 3: Practice stewardship of wildlands on your property.

- Adjacent wildlands provide critical habitat for many plants and animals that enrich our lives.
- Know your native species and exotic invasives. Don't modify vegetation without help from an expert.

For more information on Defensible Space ordinances and regulations see: firesafesonoma.org

DEFENSIBLE SPACE GUIDELINES

- **Harden the home and minimize or eliminate plantings within 5' from the structure:** the highest priority for protecting your property!
- **Plant in "islands"** to provide habitat.
- **Remove "ladder" fuels** that allow fire to move into the canopies of trees.
- **Hardscape:** non-flammable landscape features made of brick, gravel, or stone.
- **Maintenance is critical and required by law!** On an ongoing basis, keep plants free of dead material, avoid unnecessary hedging, and maintain plants with adequate irrigation.
- **Work with your neighbors.** Recognize that your Zone 2 may be within their Zone 1.
- **Mow annual grasses and other weeds to 3-4"** in the summer. It's the law!
- **In Zones 1-2, allow leaf litter** to enrich the soil in winter and spring, but minimize it in Zone 1 in the summer.
- **Avoid "gorilla hair" mulch.** Arbor mulch is a good mulch material where appropriate.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE MYTHS

- **Do we need to have a "moonscape"?** No! Diverse groupings of mostly native plants are beautiful and provide habitat. Native plants are adapted to our climate and easier to hydrate.
- **Do we have to cut down our trees?** No! Trees are important habitat elements, but we need to remove ladder fuels. Maintain a distance to the lowest branches of 3x the height of plants below, for a minimum of 6' or 1/3 the height of smaller trees. Rigorously remove debris from roofs and gutters.
- **What are the best fire resistant plants?** All plants burn. It's much more important to place plants in the right location and with their ultimate size and requirements in mind. Native plants conserve water and provide habitat.