Lakehills Fire Safe Council
Community Bulletin

Ask your landscaping questions

The next Fire Safe Council meeting on Tuesday, April 10th, features Robin Stanley, a UC-CE Master Gardener of El Dorado County. She offers a Firewise Landscaping Checklist “Score your Home” (see page 3 of this newsletter) and expertise on plants. Robin and her husband, Mark Stanley (Retired Chief Deputy Director for CA Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection), volunteer their time to educate and assist the public with their extensive knowledge about defensible space, fire resistant and native plants specific to our area.

⇒ Is poison oak fire resistant?
⇒ Will planting milkweed to attract butterflies also be beneficial in a drought?
⇒ Deer prefer to munch on which two trees: cottonwoods / gray pines / blue oaks?

Join us for this interesting and timely presentation, along with a forum to ask and get answers to your questions. These two speakers are subject matter experts & offer valuable resources. Don’t miss this opportunity to learn about the right plants in the right place!

Free Chipping Program available

Spring is the time to trim up those trees (6 feet up minimum), clear branches away from the chimney & remove dead bushes. The El Dorado County Fire Safe County offers a free chipping program to remove the debris once it’s curbside. This great service can assist in complying with California law mandating 100 ft. defensible space around structures.

Fire Funding Fix in Omnibus

Secretary Perdue Applauds Fire Funding Fix in Omnibus

(Washington, D.C., March 23, 2018) – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today expressed his appreciation for the work of Congress to find a bipartisan fix for the way the U.S. Forest Service is funded for fighting wildfires. Secretary Perdue had advocated for the change since taking office in April 2017. Congress included the solution in the FY 2018 Omnibus Spending Package, which has been signed into law by President Donald J. Trump.

“The fire funding fix, which has been sought for decades, is an important inclusion in the omnibus spending bill and I commend Congress for addressing the issue,” said Secretary Perdue. “Improving the way we fund wildfire suppression will help us better manage our forests. If we ensure that we have adequate resources for forest management, we can mitigate the frequency of wildfires and severity of future fire seasons. I thank Congressional leaders, with whom I’ve frequently discussed this issue.”

Link here for entire news release: https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAOC/bulletins/1e46559
Kidde Recalls Dual Sensor Smoke Alarm Due to Potential Safety Risk

Brand Name, Model of Affected Product: Kidde Dual Sensor (Photoelectric and Ionization) Smoke Alarms – Models PI2010 and PI9010

Hazard: A yellow protective cap in limited instances may have been left on one of the two smoke sensors in affected products during the manufacturing process, which could compromise the smoke alarms’ ability to detect smoke.

Remedy: Replace affected smoke alarms that contain the yellow protective cap. To review the full CPSC press release, click here.

Modern Homes are burning faster, and this is why ...

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah (News4Utah) - Nowadays, fewer homes catch fire than in the past. However, when they do, they burn hotter, faster and more dangerously than ever before. Modern structure fires burn eight times faster than fires in the past few decades.

Brady George, Battalion Chief for Salt Lake City Fire Department says, "What we're finding is not so much that the fire itself has changed, it's still the same complex chemical reaction, but the environment has changed significantly."

George continues to explain that the size of an average home has increased about 56% since the 1970s. In addition to that, there have been major changes to the way modern homes are constructed. In fact, George adds that the construction of two story homes has increased 142% in the last few decades, and open concept floor-plans have also seen a major spike in popularity.

“This creates an environment inside where the fire has much more space to grow,” he explains.

The size and layout of homes are not the only factors. One of the largest components to the spread of modern fires is the fuel that now exists inside our homes.

“We've transitioned away from primarily organic materials, meaning wood, cotton, wool, furs, to much more synthetic or man-made materials,” George says, “…These modern fuels have two to three times the amount of energy as their legacy counterparts.”

During a study by Underwriter Laboratories, two rooms were set ablaze and compared in a controlled setting. One is an environment filled with natural materials, like cotton and wood. The other shows an environment made primarily from synthetic materials. It takes three minutes and forty seconds for the room made of synthetic materials to become completely engulfed in flames -- this is called flashover. The room made of natural materials, on the other hand, takes nearly 30 minutes for flashover to occur.

So why do we have these synthetic materials in our homes? Well, they're much less costly than natural materials.

Battalion Chief Brady George has some tips to protect all of us from these modern fire hazards. The first is to always make sure you close the doors inside your home. Another tip is to make sure your smoke detectors are working and tested twice a year.

George adds, “Another, perhaps less palatable option, is to simply put less stuff in your home.”

According to underwriters laboratories, we had about 17 minutes to escape after a smoke alarm went off in the past. Today, they say that time has dropped down to three to four minutes.

For additional information: <<CLICK HERE>>
Firewise Landscaping Check List
UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County

1. Use the insurance chart on page 1 of the class handout to score your house: Remember – the lower your score the better. The higher your score, the more you need to take action. ______

2. What do you think is the biggest risk factor for your house and property?
_____________________________________________________

3. What have you already done to decrease fire risk around your home and property?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

4. Check 2 or more things that you can do to better protect your house:
   - Clean your roof.
   - Clean your gutters.
   - Move firewood off deck.
   - Enclose (soffit) your overhangs.
   - Remove branches overhanging your roof and chimney.
   - Remove or prune branches of flammable plants near windows.
   - Remove vegetation and flammable items from around and under decks.
   - Other

5. Check 2 or more things that you can do now to decrease fire risk on your property. Start at your house and work outward.
   - Identify the 30’ (Zone 1) and 30 - 100’ (Zone 2) perimeters around your house.
   - Remove weeds, dry grass, leaves and pine needles in both zones, working from your house outward.
   - Cut dead or dying branches from shrubs and trees in both zones.
   - Once you have cut dead branches, arrange for chipping through the EDC Fire Safe Council. Plan early before funds are gone.
   - Limb up trees to a height of at least 6’.
   - Create horizontal spacing between shrubs and trees.
   - Create vertical spacing between shrubs and trees.
   - Remove fallen leaves, needles, twigs, bark, cones, and small branches in both zones. However, they may be permitted to a depth of 4 inches.
   - Look at firewise plant lists to determine the overall vulnerability of your current landscape.
   - Create a landscape plan that incorporates plants that are both fire-resistant and drought tolerant into your landscape.
   - If you know you will be replacing some areas with more drought tolerant/firewise plants in the future, create a plan for removal of existing plants and irrigation of any new plants.
   - Other

6. Check 2 or more things that you can do this spring to decrease fire risk on your property.
   - Cut or mow annual grass down to a maximum height of 4 inches in both zones.
   - Relocate wood piles into Zone 2 when rains end.
   - Meet with your neighbors to see how you can cooperate to improve fire safety in your neighborhood.
   - Other

7. Reminders
   - Remember to work with power tools like weed eaters and mowers early in the morning when it is cooler and humidity is higher.
   - Anything that you do (safely) is better than nothing!
   - We want to empower you to find the balance of aesthetics, water wise plants, and firewise practices that are right for you.
Visualize and map your own property. Resolve that you will leave here today with a plan of action!

California law mandates 100’ of defensible space around your house and other structures. You may have to clear an even larger area, depending on your slope:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How your house ranks</th>
<th>Flexibility</th>
<th>Rank according to one insurance company’s assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grass, weeds, small shrubs</td>
<td>+12</td>
<td>Rough terrain in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrubs, small trees</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>40 degree slope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber woodland</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>Less than 1 home/10 ac.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 10 degree slope</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>1 home per 5 - 10 ac.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 20 degree slope</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>1 home per 0 – 5 ac.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 3 R’s of Fire Safe Landscaping (courtesy of Sonoma County Fire Safe Council):

**REMOVE, REDUCE, REPLACE**

The El Dorado County Fire Safe Council has provided 6 specific steps to creating a fire wise landscape and we added 2.

1. **Determine your DEFENSIBLE SPACE.**
2. **Remove all DEAD or DYING vegetation or material.**
3. **Break up CONTINUOUS vegetation.**
4. **Eliminate LADDER FUELS.**
5. **Make your defensible space LEAN, GREEN and CLEAN.**
6. **Keep up with regular MAINTENANCE.**
7. **Make your PLANS.**
8. **Use available RESOURCES.**

**REMOVE**

**STEP 1 - Determine the perimeter of your 100’ DEFENSIBLE SPACE.**
- Identify (and mark) your defensible area.

**STEP 2 - Remove all DEAD or DYING plants and combustible material.**
- This also includes firewood, scrap lumber or other flammables.

**STEP 3 - Break up CONTINUOUS vegetation.**
- Create spaces between existing trees and shrubs.
- Eliminate branches that overhang your roof or chimney.
- 10’ – 15’ spacing, horizontally and vertically, is the minimum.
- Steep slopes require increased clearance between trees and plants.
- Know when and how to hire professional help. (See Resources on page 3.)
REDUCE
STEP 4 - ELIMINATE LADDER FUELS.
- In addition to the 10’ vertical clearance under trees, if there are lower plants in the area, the cleared height requirement will increase.
- Chipping may be arranged by calling the EDC Fire Safe Council at 530 626-1700 or signing up on their website (see Resources section).

REPLACE
STEP 5 - MAKE YOUR SPACE LEAN, GREEN & CLEAN.
- Use hardscape and plantings to create fuel breaks.
- Utilize the Hydro-zoning concept, the same principle you use for incorporating drought resistant plants.
  - High water zone is the oasis nearest the house and living area.
  - Moderate water zone includes those plants that require less water.
  - Drought-tolerant plant zone is often further out (+/-100’).
- Select fire-resistant plants with:
  - Little or no seasonal accumulation of dead vegetation
  - Open, loose branching habit
  - Non-resinous woody material (for example, avoid juniper, fir and cedar)
  - Low volume of total vegetation
  - High moisture content in leaves
  - Drought tolerance
  - Slow growth, requiring less frequent pruning
- Know your elevation and microclimates as you select plants.
- Use Sunset Western Gardening & websites (see Resources) to select plants for your zone.
- Realize that plants are not fire-proof; they can be fire-resistive.
- Irrigation is a key – understanding its importance is crucial in firewise landscaping. Some plants that are drought tolerant need additional water and pruning of dead wood to be fire-resistant. (see below*)
- See the handout and resource list for more complete lists of plants. Here are a few suggestions:
  **Flowers and Groundcovers** (*requires additional water/maintenance*)
  - California fuchsia
  - candytuft
  - coreopsis
  - penstemon
  - perennial verbena
  - woodland strawberry
  - sedum
  - yarrow

  **Shrubs and Vines** (*requires additional water/maintenance*)
  - ceanothus
  - escallonia
  - Clematis armandii
  - Oregon grape
  - dwarf burning bush
  - rock rose
  - serviceberry
  - star jasmine
  - toyon*

REMOVE, REDUCE, REPLACE (AND REPEAT)
STEP 6 - MAINTENANCE is crucial.
- Simple, well-maintained landscapes are safer than elaborate landscapes that are neglected.
- Prune deadwood from beneath ground covers and shrubs.
- Clean up ground litter (pine needles & leaves).
- Keep your landscape safe and improve your landscape’s appearance at the same time.
- Consider new fire resistant plants that still add color to your landscape.

And - two more steps...

STEP 7 - Make your PLANS!
- FOR GETTING STARTED
- FOR HOW TO TACKLE BIG/DANGEROUS JOBS
- FOR AN EMERGENCY

STEP 8 – Make use of RESOURCES.

RESOURCES – THE 4th R

**Agencies**
UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Articles/] (530) 621-5512
California Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection [www.fire.ca.gov] (530) 644-2345
El Dorado County Fire Safe Council [www.edcfiresafe.org] (530) 647-1700
Firewise Communities U.S.A. [www.firewise.org]
Tahoe Regional Planning Agency [www.livingwithfire.info/tahoe] (775) 588-4547

**Books**
California Wildfire Landscaping Maureen Gilmer
Fire, Chaparral, and Survival in Southern California Richard W. Halsey
Sunset Western Garden Book (for plant zones) Lane Publishing
The Weather-Resilient Garden Charles W. G. Smith
Will Your Home Survive? R. D. Harrell & William C. Teie

**Plant Lists**
CAL FIRE Tree Notes [http://calfire.ca.gov/foreststeward/treenotes]
Cal Poly SelectTree [http://selectree.calpoly.edu/]
Oregon State Extension Plant List [http://www.firefree.org/fireresistantplants/]
WUCOLS/UC Davis Plant List [http://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS/Download_WUCOLS_IV_List/]

**Resources and Websites**
Ready, Set, Go (CAL Fire) [http://www.readyforwildfire.org/]
International Society of Arboriculture [http://firecenter.berkeley.edu/docs/CE_Master_Gardeners/Articles/Archived_Articles/firecenter.berkeley.edu/docs/CeMasterGardener8322.pdf]
UCCE Home Landscaping for Fire [http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Articles/Archived_Articles/]
UCCE/El Dorado Master Gardeners [http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/]
UCCE Statewide Master Gardeners [http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/Resources_Publications/Internet_Resources/Fire_Safety_Resources/]
UCCE Central Sierra Resources [http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/Resources/Publications/Internet_Resources/Fire_Safety_Resources/]
U.S. Disaster Preparedness [http://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan]

Should you need assistance or require special accommodations for any of our educational programs, please contact us at 530-621-5502.

The University of California working in cooperation with County Government and the United States Department of Agriculture. It is the policy of the University of California (UC) and the UC Division of Agriculture & Natural Resources not to engage in discrimination against or harassment of any person in any of its programs or activities (Complete nondiscrimination policy statement can be found at [http://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/files/215244.pdf](http://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/files/215244.pdf)). Inquiries regarding ANR’s nondiscrimination policies may be directed to Linda Marie Manton, Affirmative Action Contact, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 2801 Second Street, Davis, CA 95618, (530) 750-1318.