

# FIREWISE LANDSCAPING

## The Fire Environment

A home in the woods is surrounded by forest fuels that can burn under the right conditions. 97 percent of wildfires in Maryland are started by people, and often burn in areas where homes intermingle with forest fuels.

**Firewise Landscaping** is a *line of defense* against the threat of wildfire, creating a safety zone, or “defensible space” around your home.

The goal is to break the chain of fuel between your home and the forest. Examine your yard for fuels that can catch fire and carry it to the house, as well as areas that can catch fire from wind-blown embers.

## What You Can Do

You can landscape for fire protection while maintaining a desirable look for your land. Consider hardiness zones, soil types and available moisture when choosing landscape plants. Place plants far enough apart that fire cannot spread from one to another, or from any plants to the house. Maintain a green, mowed lawn that is free of debris.

## All Plants Can Burn!

There are no fireproof plants, but some plants are more fire-resistant than others. When considering what plants to use in your landscape, choose plants with:

- A high moisture content in the leaves
- A low oil or resin content
- An open, loose branching habit
- Drought resistance
- Few dead branches
- Good adaptation to local climate and soil
- Minimal litter/debris accumulation

## A Few Suggested Plants

Common Name ..... (Scientific name)

### Large Deciduous Trees

- Black Walnut ..... (*Juglans nigra*)
- Native Oaks ..... (*Quercus spp.*)
- Native Maples ..... (*Acer spp.*)
- River Birch ..... (*Betula nigra*)
- Sweetbay Magnolia ..... (*Magnolia virginiana*)
- Yellow Poplar ..... (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)

### Medium-Sized Deciduous Trees

- Apple/Crabapple ..... (*Malus spp.*)
- Eastern Redbud ..... (*Cercis Canadensis*)
- Flowering Dogwood ..... (*Cornus florida*)
- Native Serviceberries ..... (*Amelanchier spp.*)
- Persimmon ..... (*Diospyros virginiana*)

### Shrubs

- Arrowwood Viburnum .. (*Viburnum dentatum*)
- Bearberry ..... (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)
- Bottlebrush Buckeye ..... (*Aesculus parviflora*)
- Bush Dogwoods ..... (*Cornus spp.*)
- Common Lilac ..... (*Syringa vulgaris*)
- Elderberry ..... (*Sambucus canadensis*)
- Forsythia ..... (*Forsythia spp.*)
- Winterberry Holly ..... (*Ilex verticillata*)
- Witch-hazel ..... (*Hamamelis virginiana*)

### Ground Covers

- Candytuft ..... (*Iberis sempervirens*)
- Monkeygrass ..... (*Ophiopogon japonicus*)
- Moss-Phlox ..... (*Phlox subulata*)
- Pachysandra ..... (*Pachysandra terminalis*)
- Sweetbox ..... (*Sarcococca hookerana*)
- Stonecrop ..... (*Sedum spp.*)
- Violet ..... (*Viola spp.*)
- Wintergreen ..... (*Gaultheria procumbens*)

### Fire-Prone Plants to **AVOID** Within 30 Feet of the House

- Junipers and Cedars ..... (*Juniperous spp.*)
- Pines ..... (*Pinus spp.*)
- Spruce ..... (*Picea spp.*)
- Arborvitae ..... (*Thuja occidentalis*)
- Leyland Cypress ..... (*Cupressus leylandii*)



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or

Contact your county Forest Service office

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**[dnr.maryland.gov/firewise](http://dnr.maryland.gov/firewise)**

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# FIREWISE LANDSCAPING FOR WOODLAND HOMES



**Learn how you can protect your home from a wildfire**





# LANDSCAPING FOR FOREST FIRE PROTECTION

## Firewise Landscape Zones

### Zone 1: 0-5 Feet from the House

This area, closest to the house, is the most critical for wildfire protection. The goal for this zone is to prevent any flames from touching the house. Remove any highly flammable plants (such as evergreens) or debris that touch or are within five feet of the house. If plant cover is desired, use fire-resistant plant varieties instead of evergreens.

Use decorative gravel in place of flammable mulches. Keep the gutters and roof clean, and remove dead leaves that are under the deck or against the house. Use decorative rocks, patios, raised flowerbeds, stone walkways, or other features to create visual interest while maintaining a fuel break.

### Zone 2: 5-10 Feet from the House

The goal for Zone 2 is to stop the spread of any wildfire. Maintain a well-kept lawn that is free of flammable debris. Avoid using evergreen plants, which ignite easily and burn quickly. Occasional trees and shrubs should be placed far enough apart to prevent the spread of fire from one to another.

Keep all landscape plants in good health and prune dead limbs from trees and shrubs. Move firewood piles at least 30 feet from any buildings.

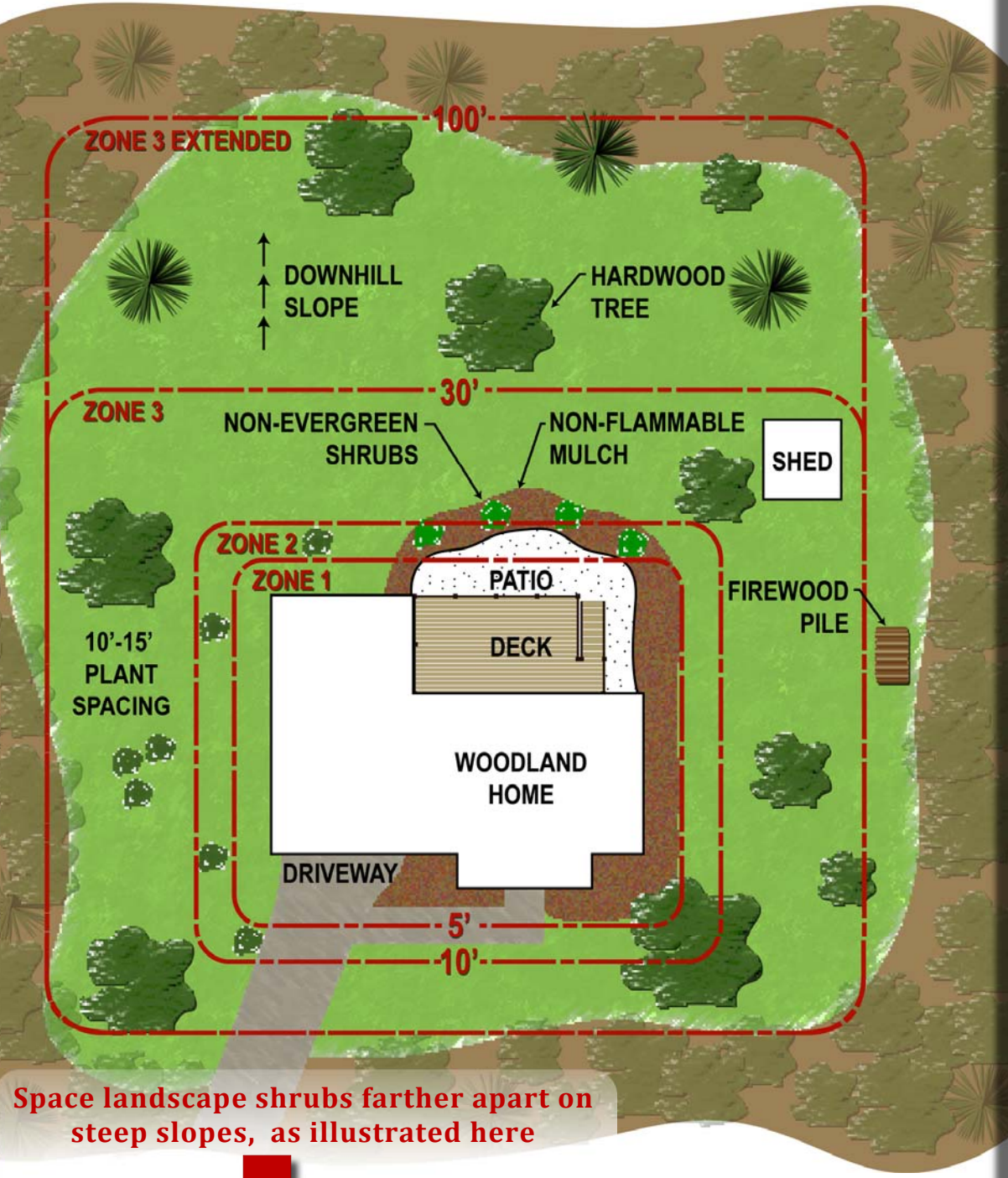
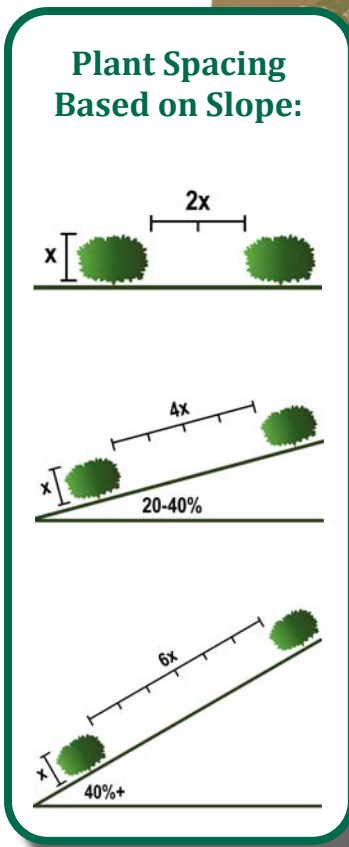
### Zone 3: 10-30 Feet from the House

When properly landscaped, Zone 3 will stop an approaching wildfire, while providing an area for firefighters to defend the house. As in all zones, a **well-maintained lawn completely surrounding the house** is the best defense against a wildfire. Place landscape plants far enough apart to prevent fire spread and allow firefighters to work. If the house is located on a steep slope, Zone 3 should be extended to 100 feet on the downhill side.

If you live in a pine forest, or have evergreen trees in your landscape, remove "ladder fuels" that can allow a fire to spread into the tree canopy. This includes low branches, smaller evergreen trees, tall shrubs, and vines.

### Other Structures

Firewise landscaping practices should always be extended to **include all outbuildings and sheds**. Wooden fences should also be included in the Firewise improvements, or separated from any buildings with a non-flammable section of fence. Special attention should be paid to decks, which are often the most vulnerable part of a house.



Space landscape shrubs farther apart on steep slopes, as illustrated here

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