



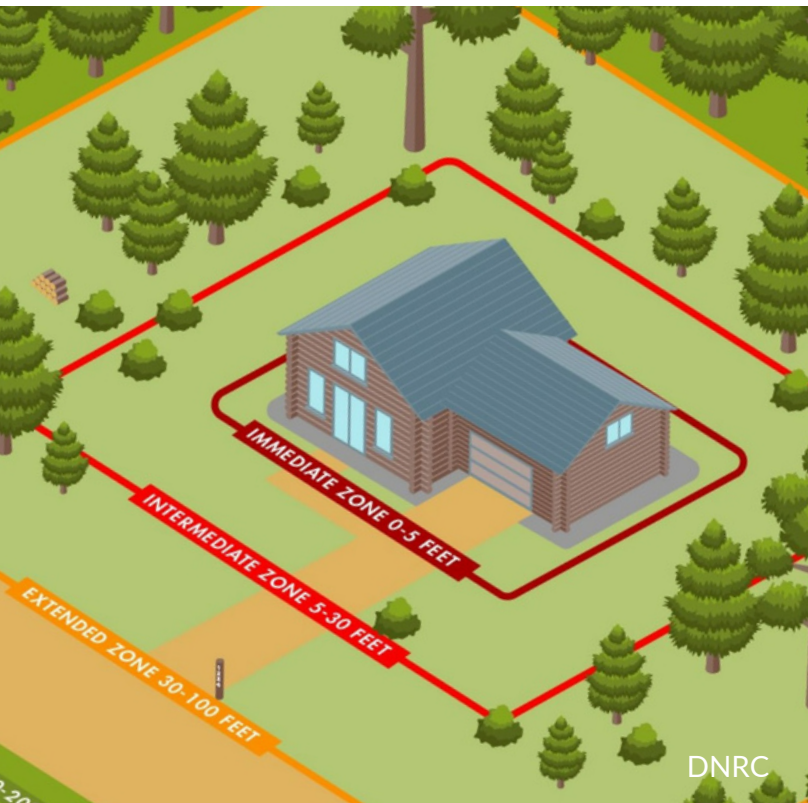
Elmo Fire, 2022, DNRC

HOW DO HOMES BURN?

Embers are the main home ignition sources during wildfires. Wildfire embers can travel up to 5 miles, landing on roofs, gutters, and yards. While we can't control where embers land, we can reduce their ability to ignite by minimizing flammable materials around the home.

HOME IGNITION ZONES

Home Ignition Zones (HIZ) are broken up into 4 areas which are measured out from the exterior of your home. The Immediate (0-5ft), Intermediate (5-30ft), Extended (30-100ft), and Outer (100-200ft). In this guide, we will be focusing on the **Immediate** and **Intermediate** zones where the majority of gardening takes place, and which studies show can have the most significant impact on protecting your home from wildfire.



DNRC

IMMEDIATE ZONE: 0-5FT

This zone extends from the exterior of your home out 5 feet. To limit direct flame contact with the home, consider removing **all vegetation** in the Immediate Zone. Research shows that having **zero combustible materials** in this zone is the best way to protect your home from wildfire, which has caused some insurers to prohibit any vegetation within the Immediate Zone.

Consider hardscaping

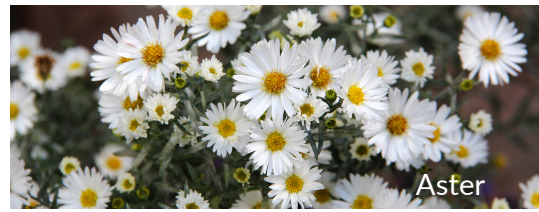
Hardscaping is defined as any non-living, inanimate component of your yard. Hardscaping provides an elegant, and noncombustible way of addressing the Immediate Zone. Hardscaping options include but aren't limited to: Concrete pathways; paving stones; rock mulch; river rocks; tile; marble; brick; and stone.



WHAT IF I'M NOT WILLING TO REMOVE ALL VEGETATION FROM THIS ZONE?

We get it - you're a gardener! While zero combustibles is the absolute best, if you really want to landscape with plants in this zone, consider the following:

Moisture content- select for plants that maintain a high moisture content in their branches/stems and leaves throughout the summer months.



Growth pattern- low, compact growth patterns are generally more fire resistant than taller, open form growth patterns.



Plant chemistry- Plants that contain high contents of water, soaps (saponins), latex, or pectin, are more fire resistant. Plants that contain high oil or resin content ignite more easily.



Collaborating with neighbors is strongly encouraged to increase your community's fire resilience. When this is not possible, focus your efforts on your own Home Ignition Zones, especially the Immediate Zone, including the structure itself, to increase the chances of your home surviving a wildfire.

- | Do | Don't |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| • Seasonal bulbs | • Large shrubs |
| • Potted plants | • Juniper |
| • Deciduous species | • Coniferous species |
| • Non-combustible mulch | • Bark mulch |

INTERMEDIATE ZONE: 5-30FT

This zone extends 5-30ft from the house and is the second most critical area for controlling the spread of wildfire to your home. This zone allows for your own creative individuality while still adhering to recommended fire resistant guidelines. Keep these rules in mind when landscaping this zone:

LEAN, CLEAN & GREEN

Do

- Create islands of plantings
- Plant fruit trees or deciduous trees
- Incorporate hardscaping to create fuel breaks
- Select fire resistant species

Don't

- Plant continuous vegetation
- Let plant debris accumulate
- Use wood bark mulch
- Forget to water!



By creating horizontal spacing between plantings, and appropriate vertical spacing (6 feet, or 1/3 height of tree) beneath trees you can reduce ladder fuels and help control the spread of fire around your house.



University of Nevada, Reno

MULCH



Mulch provides many benefits to your garden, including:

- weed suppression,
- preventing soil compaction,
- moisture retention,
- plant insulation,
- and visual appeal.

Only a few types of mulch are fire resistant. **Inorganic mulches** such as **decomposed granite, gravel, or rocks** offer superior fire-resistance and should be the top choice, especially in the Immediate Zone.

REMOVE HAZARDOUS PLANTS

Certain shrubs and trees, like juniper, cypress, and many conifers are considered unsafe in wildfire-prone areas. Juniper contains lots of dead, woody material and volatile oil content and should be removed within both the Immediate and Intermediate Zone.

NATIVE PLANTS & FIRE RESISTANCE

Native plants, shaped by centuries of coexistence with their environment, offer numerous benefits in fire-adapted gardens. They enhance biodiversity, attract pollinators, and provide habitat for local wildlife. These plants save water, require minimal care once established, promote soil health, and thrive in Montana's variable climate.

Mourning Cloak Butterfly

Lewisia

PLANT SELECTION

There are hundreds of options when it comes to fire smart plant selection. Use the lists below or go to your local nursery to find the plants that fit your garden best. For best results selects plants that are suitable to grow in your Hardiness Zone.

[Tri-County Fire Safe Working Group's Montana Plant List](#)

[MSU Extension: Fire Resistant Plants for Montana Landscapes](#)

HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU HAVE FOR YARD AND GARDEN MAINTENANCE?

NOT MUCH

Consider landscaping techniques such as:

- hardscaping
- xeriscaping
- crevice gardens

LOTS!

If you want a yard lush with plants:

- keep all plants well watered
- remove dead material
- keep vegetation spaced 3 feet from each other.

THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[MTFireInfo.org](#)

[Fire Adapted Montana Preparedness Packet](#)

[Idaho Firewise Plant List PDF](#)

FIRE SMART LANDSCAPING

IN THE MONTANA WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE

The wildfire season in Montana is getting longer and wildfires are burning more area. With the growing danger of disastrous wildfire, preparing your home and garden has never been more important.

Firescaping is the practice of landscaping and gardening around your home with wildfire mitigation at the core of your design. Firescaping combines extensive, in-depth research on wildland fires and Home Ignition Zones (HIZ) guidelines with landscaping and gardening techniques, resulting in a safer and visually appealing yard surrounding your home.

Lewis Flax

Purple Coneflower

Blue Iris

Blanket Flower