

# Defensible Space

Every home requires “Defensible Space.” Defensible space is the area around the home free from dangerous accumulations of flammable pyrophytic (those less likely to burn and slower to ignite) vegetation. This allows firefighters a safe working area from which to defend against an oncoming wildfire.

A Firewise landscape includes LOW pyrophytic plants, shrubs and trees strategically placed and maintained to resist the spread of fire. It is also a landscape that is maintained free of dead and dry plant materials, with living plants, shrubs and trees properly spaced and managed so they will not serve as ladder fuels during a wildfire.

**The key is to make your house one that firefighters can effectively defend.**

## Understanding Your Local Ordinance

- Check local ordinances for defensible space or weed abatement; they may be stricter than state requirements; for example, some areas like San Diego County require 50 feet of clearance in Zone 1.
- Consult your local fire department or fire protection district for specific local rules.

## Defensible Space Zone Guide

### Zone 0 - Ember-Resistant Zone “0 to 5 Feet”

Zone 0 extends 5 feet from buildings, structures, decks, etc. Start closest to your home to be ember-resistant.

While not legally required yet, Zone 0 is key for wildfire defense and preventing fires from spreading to your home. Here are the current guidelines:

- Use gravel, pavers, or concrete instead of combustible mulch.
- Clear dead weeds, grass, and debris; check roofs, gutters, and outdoor areas.
- Keep branches trimmed 10 feet away from chimneys and stovepipes.
- Minimize combustible items like furniture and planters on decks.
- Move firewood and lumber to Zone 2 for safety.
- Replace combustible fencing and gates with **fire-resistant materials**.
- Shift garbage and recycling containers to a safer area outside this zone.
- Relocate boats, RVs, and vehicles away from this zone to reduce fire risks.

### Zone 1 - Lean, Clean & Green Zone “Up to 30 Feet”

Zone 1 extends 30 feet from buildings, structures, decks, etc. or to your property line, whichever is closer.

- Clear all dead plants, grass, and weeds. **Remove dead leaves and pine needles from your yard, roof, and gutters.**
- Trim overhanging branches and keep them 10 feet from your chimney.
- Regularly trim trees to maintain a 10-foot gap from others.
- Move wood piles to Zone 2.
- Prune flammable plants and shrubs near windows.
- Clear flammable vegetation and items from under decks, balconies, and stairs.
- Maintain space between trees, shrubs, and flammable items like patio furniture and wood piles.
- Ensure outbuildings and LPG tanks have 10 feet of clear space to bare soil and no flammable vegetation within an additional 10 feet around

them.

### Zone 2 - Reduce Fuel Zone “30-100 Feet”

Zone 2 extends from 30 feet to 100 feet out from buildings, structures, decks, etc. or to your property line, whichever is closer.

- Trim annual grass to a maximum height of 4 inches.
- Space out shrubs and trees horizontally. • Ensure vertical spacing between grass, shrubs, and trees.
- Remove fallen leaves, needles, and small branches, but can leave up to 3 inches
- Keep exposed wood piles at least 10 feet clear from surroundings, down to the soil
- Ensure outbuildings and LPG tanks have 10 feet of clear space to bare soil and no flammable vegetation within an additional 10 feet around them

# Kern County Defensible Space & Planting Guide



For more information on how to make your home & property more fire resistant, or how the Kern Fire Safe Council supports Kern County's Wildland Urban Interface, please go to our website:

[www.kernfiresafe.org](http://www.kernfiresafe.org)

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## Fire-Smart Landscaping

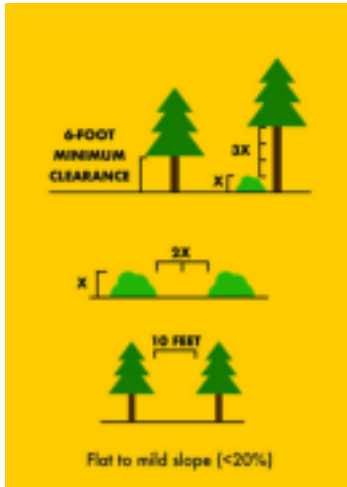
Fire-resistant landscaping involves much more than basic yard maintenance. It combines plant selection and upkeep to help stop fire from reaching your home. With smart planning and regular care, you can create a beautiful, water-efficient, and fire-resistant landscape.

## Plant Spacing

Proper spacing between grass, shrubs, and trees is key in slowing wildfire spread. This spacing varies based on vegetation type, size, and land slope – larger plants on steeper slopes require more space than smaller vegetation on flat areas.

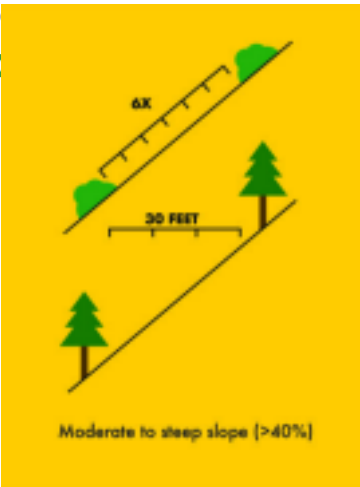
## Vertical Spacing

- Trim tree branches up to at least 6 feet from the ground.
- Increase vertical space between shrubs and trees to prevent fire from climbing.
- Use a formula for vertical spacing: Multiply shrub height by 3 for clearance.



Example: A 5-foot shrub near a tree needs 15 feet of clearance to the tree's lowest b

## Hc



Horizontal spacing depends

on the slope of the land and the height of the shrubs or trees. Check the chart below to determine spacing distance.

## Plants in Kern County

Many xeriscape and native plants, shrubs and trees found in the Kern Mountain Communities are listed here, and are low in pyrophytic properties. (they WILL NOT easily ignite or burn intensely).

The xeriscape and native plants, shrubs and trees listed that are in a **RED ITALIC** & identified with the **"b"** icon are HIGH in PYROPHYTIC PROPERTIES (they WILL easily ignite or burn intensely).

**HIGH PYROPHYTIC** plants, shrubs and trees should be planted in areas further than 15 feet from a structure, including decks and patios. Maintenance of high Pyrophytic plants should include removing all dead plant material. The crowns (lower branches) of shrubs should be raised at least 2 to 3 feet off the ground and limited to a single plant or shrub, unless the shrub is isolated or heavily modified.

## Flowering Perennials

Alum Root  
 Beardtongue  
 Bergenia  
 Blue Catmint  
 Buckwheat - Sulphur-flowered  
 Buckwheat -  
 Wright's  
 Coral Bells  
 Daylily



Dianthus  
 Fuchsia - California  
 Garden Meadow  
 Goldenrod - California  
 Hollyhock  
 Honeysuckle  
 Iris - Bearded  
 Jupiter's Beard  
 Lamb's Ears  
 Lavender  
 Mallow - Apricot  
 Mint - Coyote  
 Mint - Hummingbird  
 Mojave Mound  
 Penstemon -  
 Beakflowered

Penstemon - Bumblebee  
 Penstemon - Firecracker  
 Penstemon - Scarlet  
 Phlox - Creeping  
 Poppy - California  
 Poppy - Oriental  
 Poppy - Prickly  
 Primrose - California Evening  
 Primrose - Fragrant Evening  
 Rydberg's Horkelia  
 Shasta Daisy  
 Wallflower - Western  
 Western Blue Flag  
 Whirling Butterflies  
 Yarrow - Moonshine  
 Yarrow - Paprika  
 Yarrow - Woolly



## Shrubs

Apache Plume  
 Blue Mist  
 Butterfly Bush  
 Currant  
 Elderberry  
 Gray Santolina (Lavender)  
 Honeysuckle Lavender  
 Lilac  
 Oregon Grape  
 Sage - Desert Purple  
 Sage -  
 Garden  
 Sage -  
 Meadow



Sage - Rose  
 Sage - Russian  
 Sage - Silver  
 Snowberry  
 Wild Rose  
**Bitter Brush -b**  
**Flannel Bush -**  
**Juniper Shrubs (any type) - b**  
**Manzanita - Greenleaf - b**  
**Mountain Mahogany (Ironwood) - b Mountain**  
**Whitethorn - b**  
**Sagebrush - b**  
**Serviceberry - t**

## Ground Cover

Coral Bells  
 Dwarf Periwinkle  
 Ivy Geranium  
 Sandwort  
 Strawberries  
 Sweet Alyssum  
 Trailing  
 Gazania  
 Wolly  
 Yarrow



## Trees

Black Oak  
 Colorado Blue Spruce  
 Cherry Plum  
 Flowering Crab Apple  
 Freeman Maple Tree  
 Quaking Aspen  
**Incense Cedar-◇**  
**Jeffrey Pine -**  
**Juniper - (all types, including Western Juniper)**  
**^**  
**Leyland Cypress-◇**  
**Pinyon Pine -**  
**White Fir-◇**