

What is Defensible Space?



Defensible space is the required space between structures and the wildland area that, under normal conditions, creates a sufficient buffer to slow or halt the spread of wildfire to a structure. It protects the home from igniting due to direct flame or radiant heat. Defensible space is essential for structure survivability during wildland fire conditions. For more information about defensible space zones and preparedness techniques within each, visit the Firewise USA® website, www.firewise.org.

ZONE ONE

Zone One extends 30 feet out from buildings, structures, decks, etc.

- Remove all dead or dying vegetation.
- Remove **“ladder fuels”** (low-level vegetation that allows the fire to spread from the ground to the tree canopy). Create at least 6 feet of separation between low-level vegetation and tree branches. This can be done by reducing the height of low-level vegetation and/or trimming low tree branches.
- Create “fire-free” area within 5 feet of home, using non-flammable landscaping materials and/or high-moisture content, drought-resistant vegetation.
- Trim tree canopies regularly to keep their branches a minimum of 10 feet from structures and other trees.
- Remove leaf litter (dry leaves/pine needles) from yard, roof and rain gutters.
- Relocate woodpiles or other combustible materials into Zone Two.
- Remove combustible material and vegetation from around and under decks, lanai, or the entire house if foundation is post-and-pier.
- Remove or prune vegetation near windows.



ZONE TWO *

Zone Two extends 30 to 100 feet out from buildings, structures and decks. You can minimize the chance of fire jumping from plant to plant by removing dead material and removing and/or thinning vegetation. The minimum spacing between vegetation is three times the dimension of the plant.

- Remove “ladder fuels.”
- Cut or mow annual grass down to a maximum height of 4 inches.
- Trim tree canopies regularly to keep their branches a minimum of 10 feet from other trees/cluster of trees.

* For larger properties, consider areas outside of Zone Two as a third zone to address. Continue reducing ladder fuels, managing fuels, hardening structures, and properly storing combustible materials.

Actions You Can Take Today!



Weed around the property regularly, especially areas that a lawn mower is not appropriate for (tall dry grasses, rocky terrain, etc.)



Remove leaf litter and other debris that accumulate around the building, under vegetation, and other collection areas.



Remove leaf litter, straw and other debris from under and around propane tanks to create 10 feet of clearance around it.



Eliminate ladder fuels by pruning tree branches on trees around the property to within at least 6 feet of the ground, using a bypass lopper (seen above), pruner saw, or long reach/hand pruner.



Remove flammable materials from underneath the house, decks, porches, and lanai. Common flammables include scrap-wood, firewood, and combustible furniture.



Mow the lawn regularly to keep grasses shorter than 4 inches tall around the home. Do not mow in the heat of the day or when the wind is blowing. Never mow in dry vegetation.

Watch Out for Exotic Vegetation

Non-native trees, such as ironwood (seen below) constantly drop needles, leaves, branches, and other debris, so it's best to stay on top of removing them from the ground before the pile becomes a major project. Consider reforesting these areas with native trees that don't drop large amounts of debris.



Invasive grasses such as guinea and fountain grass grow rapidly when un-managed and can dry out very quickly, creating a major fire hazard. Weed them often and consider replanting with low-lying, drought-tolerant, native ground cover.

