

VEGETATION MAINTENANCE

PROPERTIES IN THE
VERY HIGH FIRE HAZARD
SEVERITY ZONE (VHFHSZ)



Fire-smart landscaping isn't necessarily the same thing as a well-maintained yard. Fire-smart landscaping requires careful plant selection, placement, spacing, and maintenance to help resist the spread of fire to your home. This handout is a basic guide for suggestions on how to maintain, plant, and remove vegetation to be compliant with the new 2025 WUI codes.

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Zone 0
0-5 feet from home

Zone 1
5-30 feet from home

Zone 2
30-100 feet from home

- Do not plant anything within 5 feet (Zone 0) of your house or other structures
- Instead, utilize non-combustible mulches such as rocks, decomposed granite, and gravel or install hardscaping such as concrete, brick, or pavers or other such material to create interest around your house

- Select fire-resistant plants
- Space plants apart
- Remove dead/dry vegetation
- Prune trees away from roof & chimney

- Reduce plant and tree density

Vegetation Maintenance ends at your property line regardless of zone designation

FIRE SMART LANDSCAPING

Fire-smart plants are usually easier to maintain and more naturally resistant to igniting from flames & embers. These plants are NOT "fireproof", and all require irrigation and frequent maintenance to resist ignition. Well irrigated and mulched plants will maintain a higher moisture content in their branches/stems and leaves throughout the year.

MAINTENANCE IS CRITICAL.

FIRE-SMART PLANT CHARACTERISTICS

- Tend to have leaves, not needles
- Leaves tend to be supple, moist and easily crushed
- Sap is water-like and typically does not have a strong odor
- Shrubs are low-growing (2' or lower) with minimal buildup of dead material
- Taller shrubs are clean, not bushy or twiggy
- Trees tend to be clean, not bushy, and have little deadwood

**CREATE
DEFENSIBLE
SPACE**

**REMOVE
HAZARDOUS
VEGETATION**

**REPLACE WITH
FIRE SMART
PLANTS**

**REGULARLY
MAINTAIN**

TREE MAINTENANCE

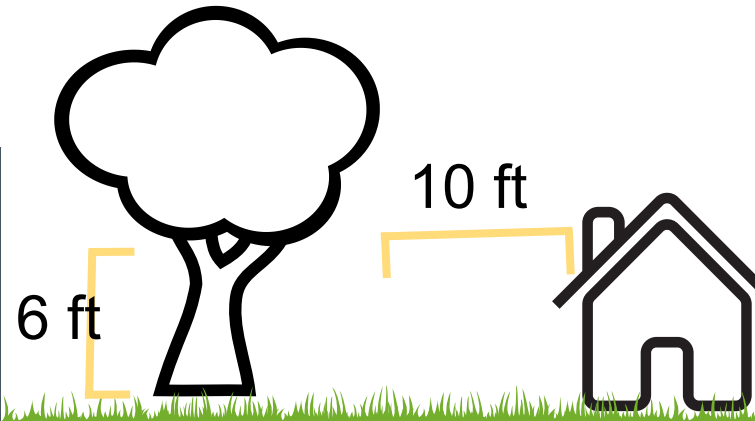
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The City of SLO is committed to reducing wildfire risk. One way to reduce opportunities for fire to spread is by creating and maintaining separation (vertical and horizontal) between trees and your home. The first step is Tree Maintenance. If Tree Maintenance is not possible, then Tree Removal may be required. Provided below are tips to guide you on how to manage trees located on properties within the VHFSZ.

TREE MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

- Trim tree canopy at least 5 ft away from walls and above roofs and 10 ft away from any chimney from a house or structure
- Water trees regularly and place mulch around trees in Zone 1 (5–30 ft) and Zone 2 (30–100 ft)
- Prune all dead branches from trees
- Prune lower branches to 6 feet above the ground



TREE PRUNING RESOURCES



[Urban Tree Foundation](#)

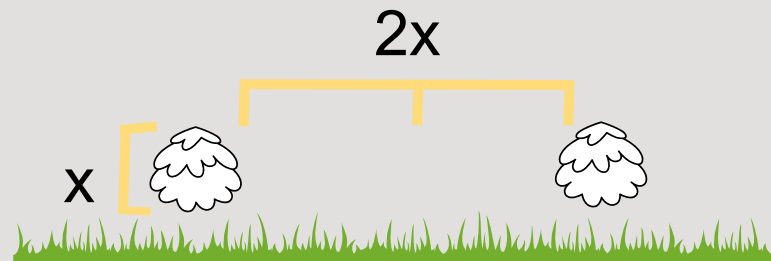


[Tree Training Cue Card](#)

If you are unable to maintain your trees yourself, The City recommends hiring an ISA Certified Arborist

SPACING

- The spacing between grass, shrubs, and trees is crucial to reduce the spread of wildfire
- The spacing is determined by the type and size of the shrubs and trees, and the slope of the land
- For example, a property on a steep slope with larger plant life will require greater spacing between trees and shrubs than a level property that has small, sparse vegetation



GENERAL RULE: Provide space between shrubs that is two times the height of the shrub

VERTICAL SPACING

Eliminate opportunities for a vertical “fire ladder”:

- Remove branches beneath large trees for a 6 ft minimum clearance
- Create proper vertical spacing between shrubs and the lowest branches of trees
- It's best not to plant shrubs below trees, if you do, keep at least three times the height of any shrubs between the shrubs and the lowest branches of trees

