

## Fire-wise Landscape

### 07.17.16 Q & A :

**Question:** How can I have a landscape that is attractive, water-saving, and fire-wise?

**Answer:** The last few years have been difficult as we have had severe drought that has required cutbacks to watering and also caused much of the native vegetation that is part of many of our greenspaces to dieback leaving dead, dry undergrowth. You are wise to be proactive in making your landscape fire-safe as we continue to have a very active fire season. The way to create a landscape that is attractive, water-saving, and fire wise is to focus on the three R's: "Remove, Reduce and Replace."

REMOVE dead or dying material or other hazardous fuel sources from your landscape, this includes cleaning up shrubs that have dead branches, dry leaves and dry grass or weeds. Keep all plants near the house low and green. Don't forget to clean gutters and any valleys in the roof top regularly.

REDUCE and space out remaining plantings to eliminate the continuous line of vegetation that can serve as ladder fuels. Ladder fuels can be dry grass, shrubs, or small trees which grow so close together that they allow fire to move up into the tops of trees, causing it to spread more quickly. Break up the landscape with decomposed granite or brick paths and other noncombustible hardscaping.

REPLACE by replanting selected areas that had to be removed with more fire safe plants. These are plants that stay green all summer and do not have a high oil content. For a list of fire-safe plants see the Cal Fire site <http://www.readyforwildfire.org/Fire-Safe-Landscaping/> or to get more information on landscaping for fire safety read the publication from UC, Berkeley at [http://firecenter.berkeley.edu/docs/CE\\_homelandscaping.pdf](http://firecenter.berkeley.edu/docs/CE_homelandscaping.pdf)

There are a lot of misconceptions about what a fire-wise landscape is, and isn't. In many cases, the work you do on reducing the fire risk of your property can actually result in a more attractive and healthier landscape and reduce your overall water use.