

Nearly every state has experienced fires that rage out of control in the landscape. While the largest and most devastating burn in the West, fires also spread in the East where suburb meets country, or housing development meets conservation land.

Homeowners can protect their properties in two ways:

- Design and maintain a landscape that discourages fires;
- Build with flame-resistant materials.

“Fires need fuel, such as dead trees, shrubs and grasses,” says Peter Gerstenberger, senior advisor for safety, standards and compliance for the Tree Care Industry Association. “While no landscape is fireproof, there are steps you should take to reduce the danger.”



5755 Willow Lane  
Lake Oswego, OR 97035

Tel: (503) 744-0914  
Fax: (503) 744-0913

E-mail: [info@gotreecare.com](mailto:info@gotreecare.com)  
Web site: [www.GOTreecare.com](http://www.GOTreecare.com)

Contact: James Kinder, Staff Arborist  
E-Mail: [james@GOTreecare.com](mailto:james@GOTreecare.com)

## Don't Fuel the Fire

**The Tree Care Industry Association offers these tips for your landscape to combat wildfires.**

Reduce the amount of fuel around your home. Your landscape needs an area of reduced fuels between your home and undeveloped land. This provides enough distance between a building and a fire to ensure that your home can survive without firefighters.

All tree limbs that hang over the roof, as well as any dead branches, should be removed. Leaves, needles and other dead vegetation should not be allowed to build up on the roof or in gutters. No tree limbs should come within 10 to 15 feet of your home.

In parts of the country where wildfires are rare, an area of well-irrigated vegetation should extend at least 30 feet from your home on all sides. In high-hazard areas, a clearance of between 50 and 100 feet or more may be necessary – especially on downhill sides of the lot.

Further from the house, install low-growing shrubs. Trees should be at least 10 feet apart, and all dead or dying limbs should be pruned by a professional arborist. Careful pruning preserves a tree's appearance, enhances structural integrity, and assists in the plant's ability to resist fire.

The lower limbs of tall shade trees should be pruned within 6 feet of the ground. A professional climber can thin selected trees and remove dead or dying trees. Beyond 100 feet from the house, dead wood and older trees should be removed or thinned.

As a general rule, the healthier the tree, the more likely it is to survive a fire. In addition to pruning, a professional arborist can recommend fertilization, disease treatment or pest control measures to promote healthy trees. Landscape design and maintenance are important factors in a home's survival.

**Homeowners who are looking for someone to assess their landscape and make recommendations should consult a professional arborist.**