

Seasonal Firewise Practices

by Dave the Forester

Hello Sierra homeowners. During each season, I will be writing an article coinciding with the release of our newsletter highlighting what you can do to better prepare your home and property for the coming fire season. There are simple steps you can take to help reduce the likelihood of your home igniting during a wildfire event. Taking a little time to perform some easy and essential corrective measures can go a long way in making your home fire safe and allowing you to rest a little easier during the height of fire season.



Spring: April- June

Well we made it through another glorious winter. The days are getting longer and warmer, the trees are budding out, streams are surging, birds are singing, and the wildflowers are turning the hills into colors that only nature is capable of producing. What a great time of year! But remember that we have some essential work to get done. Thankfully we got some essential work done in the winter months, (see the previous Seasonal Firewise Practices by Dave the Forester) which will make our workload less during this season. Let's get started.

If your yard is anything like mine, the warmer days surged life back into every rooted organism. This surge of life has caused our grasses, trees, and shrubs to grow (almost out of control in my case) very rapidly. This type of vegetation, if left unattended, can pose a serious risk as the season progresses and the days get even hotter causing them to wilt and dry-out. This is a great time to get out, prune back some of the newer growth, and mow those lawns. Mowing lawns (be very careful when using power tools because they often produce sparks – either by the blade or the engine) causes many fires so be sure to mow early enough in the day when there is still condensation on the grass. If your landscaping consists mainly of fallen pine needles or other such material this is a great time to rake that material completely from the first 5 feet surrounding your home, deck - under the deck as well, barn or any other building.

If you're like me your are very excited to get back out into your yard after a cold wet winter. As you get out there it is my recommendation that you once again check for the effects (broken branches, leaves and dead limbs) of winter storms. By taking some time to remove this type of material you are reducing the risk of fire spread for yourself and neighbors. If you are in an area where burning is permitted be sure to make sure that it is a burn day by calling your local fire department and to use great caution when burning as many large fires have been started by unattended burn piles. These materials can be composted (if they are small enough) and/or chipped (using your local Fire Safe Council FREE chipper program). To find out more about your local FSC and their services and/or to get involved visit our [Fire Safe Council](#) webpage.



Remember to focus on potential ignition sources on your house. Start with your roof and move your way down. Remove flammable debris from your roof and gutters as this could ignite by firebrands during a fire. Check all of your vents and make sure that they are covered with at least a ¼ inch metal mesh to help reduce the likelihood of a firebrand entering your home. Remove flammable material from exterior window seals and other areas where winter weather has caused deposition of such material, this includes decks, fences and the base of the structure. This work can be done fairly fast but be sure to spend some extra time checking inconspicuous locations that could put your home in danger if flammable material was left there.

This is a time of year when you will be spending more time lounging on your deck furniture, or in my case outdoor furniture. Most deck/outdoor furniture is relatively safe as far as fire ignition is concerned. What you do need to be concerned about are furniture pads and other flammable material that you may place on your deck and or deck furniture. This type of material may pose a great threat to your home if it is out during a fire. There is an easy fix to this potential fire risk. Bring these items inside when you are not using them (the furniture pads and other flammable materials). The added benefit of taking this simple action is that these pads and cushions will also last longer. This is a win-win to me. So go ahead and relax in the great outdoors on your comfy chairs, just bring the pads in when you're leaving.



Last season we thought about what we would want to use in our landscaping, this season we get to actually have fun planting all the beautiful plants, fruits, and vegetables that will create a beautiful landscape for all to enjoy. Be sure to use Firewise plant choices when planting next to your home. You want plants surrounding your home to be very fire resistant and well irrigated. For recommended Firewise plants to use in your area you could contact your local Master Gardeners, visit the [Firewise Communities](#) website, and for the Sierra Nevada you could visit the [El Dorado County Fire Safe Council](#) website. Remember that you could have a landscape that is both appealing and Firewise by making the right vegetative choices.



I will leave you with this. Fire affects us all and does not discriminate or stop at property lines. We need to work together as communities and neighbors in order to protect ourselves. A community that works together will thrive and survive together. So let's be good stewards of the land and our community and get out into our yards and do our Firewise work. And don't be afraid to ask your neighbor if they need help while you are at it. A community is made up of good people looking out for each other and come fire season this is more important than ever. If you have any questions about the Firewise program feel free to contact me and I will be more than willing to help.



Have fun and be well.

David Jaramillo ([david \[AT\] sierraforestlegacy \[DOT\] org](mailto:david@sierraforestlegacy.org))

Registered Professional Forester # 2839