



FORESTRY

FireWise Plant Materials

no. 6.305

by F.C. Dennis¹

Quick Facts...

FireWise landscaping can be aesthetically pleasing while reducing potential wildfire fuel.

Plant choice, spacing and maintenance are critical.

Your landscape, and the plants in it, must be maintained to retain their FireWise properties.

Creating a “defensible space” around your home is one of the most important and effective steps you can take to protect you, your family and your home from catastrophic wildfire. Defensible space is the area between a structure and an oncoming wildfire where nearby vegetation has been modified to reduce a wildfire’s intensity. (See fact sheet 6.302, *Creating Wildfire-Defensible Zones.*)

Many people resist creating defensible space around their homes because they believe these areas will be unattractive and unnatural. This is far from true. With careful planning, FireWise landscaping can be aesthetically pleasing while reducing potential wildfire fuel. It can actually enhance beauty and property values, as well as personal safety.

Many native plants are highly flammable during different seasons of the year. At such times, left unmanaged, they can accelerate the spread of a wildfire through your neighborhood, threatening homes, property and lives.

All vegetation, naturally occurring and otherwise, is potential fuel for fire. Its type, amount and arrangement has a dramatic effect on fire behavior. There are no truly “fireproof” plant species, so plant choice, spacing and maintenance are critical to defensible space landscaping. In fact, **where** and **how** you plant may be more important than **what** you plant. However, given alternatives, choose plant species that tend to be more resistant to wildfire.

General concepts to keep in mind when choosing and planting FireWise species are:

- A plant’s moisture content is the single most important factor governing its volatility. (However, *resin* content and other factors in some species render them flammable even when the plant is well-watered.) Conifers tend to be flammable due to their oil and pitch content, regardless of their water content.
- Deciduous plants tend to be more fire resistant because their leaves have higher moisture content and their basic chemistry is less flammable. Also, when deciduous trees are dormant, there is less fuel to carry fire through their canopies.

In some cases, there is a strong correlation between drought tolerance and fire resistance. For example, a plant may shed its leaves or needles during extreme drought. Other drought-tolerant species may have smaller leaves or thick, succulent leaves. These plants offer less fuel or have a higher moisture content, both of which help reduce fire hazard.

There also appears to be a correlation between a plant’s salt tolerance and natural fire resistance. Plants adapted to salty conditions, and actually growing in salty situations, may better resist burning.

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Putting Knowledge to Work

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FireWise Plant List

The following list was prepared by Phil Hoefer, Colorado State Forest Service. It was reviewed by Jim Knopf, a landscape architect in Boulder, and two landscape architects on Colorado's Western Slope. Bloom time is approximate (observed in Boulder at 5,600 feet).

Key: Water needs: VL = very low L = low M = medium H = high
 Sun/Shade: S = sun PS = part sun Sh = shade
 Elevation: Y = Yes N = No ? = Questionable or unknown

Scientific Name	Common Name	Approx.	Sun/Shade Preference	Approx.	Elevation (1,000 ft.)					Approx. Bloom Month
		Water Needs		Mature Height	5	6	7	8	9	
Flowers and Ground Covers										
<i>Achillea lanulosa</i> ^a	Native yarrow	L-H	S/PS	1.5 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jul
<i>Achillea tomentosa</i> ^b	Woolly yarrow	M-H	S/PS	.5'	Y	Y	N	N	N	Jul
<i>Aconitum</i> spp. ^c	Monkshood	M-H	S	2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Jul
<i>Aconitum columbianum</i> ^{ac}	Columbian monkshood	M-H	S	2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Jul
<i>Ajuga reptans</i> ^b	Bugleweed	H	Sh	< .5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Jul
<i>Alchemilla</i> sp.	Lady's mantle	M-H	PS/Sh	1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Jun-Jul
<i>Allium cernuum</i> ^{ac}	Nodding onion	L-H	S/PS	1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun
<i>Allium geyeri</i> ^{ac}	Geyer onion	L-H	S/PS	1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Jun
<i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i> ^a	Pearly everlasting	L-H	S	1.5 - 2.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Aug
<i>Anemone blanda</i>	Windflower	M-H	S/PS	1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Apr-May
<i>Antennaria parvifolia</i> ^{ab}	Small-leaf pussytoes	M	S/PS	<.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun
<i>Antennaria rosea</i> ^{ab}	Rosy pussytoes	M	S/PS	<.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun
<i>Aquilegia</i> spp.	Columbine	M-H	S/PS	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Jul
<i>Aquilegia coerulea</i> ^a	Colorado blue columbine	M-H	S/PS	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Jul
<i>Aquilegia chrysantha</i> ^a	Yellow columbine	M-H	S/PS	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Aug
<i>Arabis</i> sp. ^b	Rockcress	L-H	S	< 1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Jun
<i>Armeria maritima</i>	Sea thrift	L-H	S/PS	.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Apr-Jun
<i>Artemisia caucasica</i>	Caucasian sage	L-M	S/PS	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	n/a
<i>Artemisia frigida</i> ^{ac}	Fringed sage	L-M	S	1 - 1.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a
<i>Artemisia ludoviciana</i> ^a	Prairie sage	L-M	S	1 - 1.5'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	n/a
<i>Aster laevis</i> ^a	Smooth aster	L-H	S/PS	1 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Aug-Sep
<i>Aster porteri</i> ^a	Porter aster	L-M	S	1'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Aug-Sep
<i>Aubrieta</i> sp. ^b	False rockcress	M	S	1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Apr-May
<i>Aurinia</i> sp. ^b	Basket of gold	M	S/PS	1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Apr-May
<i>Calochortus gunnisonii</i> ^a	Mariposa lily	M-H	S	.5 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Jul-Aug
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i> ^a	Common harebell	M-H	S	.5 - 1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Oct
<i>Centranthus ruber</i>	Jupiter's beard	L-H	S/Sh	2 - 2.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	May-Oct
<i>Cerastium strictum</i> ^{ab}	Mouse ear chickweed	M	S/PS	1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	May-Jun
<i>Cerastium tomentosum</i> ^b	Snow-in-summer	L-M	S/PS	1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Jun
<i>Claytonia lanceolata</i> ^a	Spring beauty	M	Sh	.5 - 1.5'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Mar-Apr
<i>Convallaria majalis</i> ^{bc}	Lily-of-the-valley	H	Sh	< 1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	May-Jun
<i>Delosperma nubigenum</i> ^b	Hardy yellow iceplant	M-H	S	.5'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Jun
<i>Delphinium</i> spp. ^c	Delphinium	M-H	S/PS	.5 - 3'+	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Jul
<i>Dianthus</i> spp.	Pinks	L-H	S	<.5' - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Aug
<i>Doronicum</i> sp.	Leopard's bane	H	S/PS	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Jul-Aug
<i>Echinacea purpurea</i> ^a	Purple coneflower	M	S	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jul-Aug
<i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>	Fireweed	H	S/PS	3'	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jul-Aug
<i>Erigeron flagellaris</i> ^a	Whiplash daisy, trailing fleabane	L-M	S	< 1'	Y	Y	?	?	?	Jun-Jul
<i>Eriogonum umbellatum</i> ^a	Sulphur flower	M	S/PS	<.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Jul
<i>Erysimum asperum</i> ^a	Western wallflower	M	S/PS	1'+	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Jun-Jul
<i>Gaillardia aristata</i> ^a	Blanket flower	L-M	S	1 - 1.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jul-Sep
<i>Galium boreale</i> ^{ab}	Northern bedstraw	M-H	Sh	<1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Jun
<i>Geranium</i> spp.	Hardy geraniums	M	Sh/PS	2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Oct
<i>Geranium caespitosum</i> ^a	Wild geranium	M	Sh/PS	2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Oct
<i>Geum triflorum</i>	Prairie smoke	M-H	S/PS	1.5'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Jun
<i>Helianthella quinquenervis</i> ^a	Aspen sunflower	M	S	1'	?	?	?	Y	Y	?
<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Rockrose	M-H	S	< 1'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	May-Jun
<i>Helianthus pumilus</i> ^a	Small sunflower	M	S	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Jun-Jul
<i>Heuchera</i> spp.	Coral bells	M-H	PS/Sh	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Aug
<i>Ipomopsis aggregata</i> ^a	Scarlet gilia	M	S/PS	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Aug
<i>Iris germanica</i>	Bearded iris	L-M	S	1 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Jun

Scientific Name	Common Name	Approx. Water Needs	Sun/Shade Preference	Approx. Mature Height	Elevation (1,000 ft.)					Approx. Bloom Month
					5	6	7	8	9	
<i>Iris missouriensis</i> ^{ac}	Missouri iris	M-H	S	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May
<i>Lamium</i> sp. ^b	Dead nettle	M-H	Sh	< 1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	May-Jun
<i>Lavandula</i> spp.	Lavender	L-M	S	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Jun-Nov
<i>Leucocrinum montanum</i> ^a	Sand lily	L-M	S	< 1'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	May
<i>Liatris punctata</i> ^a	Dotted gayfeather	VL-L	S	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Aug-Oct
<i>Linum lewisii</i> ^{ac}	Wild blue flax	L-H	S/PS	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Sep
<i>Lupinus argenteus</i> ^{ac}	Silver lupine	M	Sh/PS	1 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Jul
<i>Mertensia lanceolata</i> ^a	Narrow-leaved chiming bells	M-H	Sh/PS	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Jun
<i>Mimulus guttatus</i> ^a	Yellow monkey-flower	H	Sh	1'	?	Y	Y	Y	Y	?
<i>Monarda fistulosa</i> ^a	Native beebalm	M-H	S/PS	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jul-Oct
<i>Oenothera caespitosa</i> ^a	White stemless evening primrose	L-M	S	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Aug
<i>Papaver orientale</i>	Oriental poppy	H	S/Sh	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Jun
<i>Penstemon caespitosus</i> ^{ab}	Mat penstemon	L-M	S	< .5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun
<i>Penstemon secundiflorus</i>	Sidebells	L-M	S	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	May-Jun
<i>Penstemon teucrioides</i> ^a	Germander penstemon	L-M	S	.5'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Jun-Jul
<i>Penstemon virens</i> ^{ac}	Blue mist penstemon	M	S/PS	.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Jun
<i>Phlox subulata</i>	Moss phlox	M	S	< .5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May
<i>Polemonium</i> sp.	Jacob's ladder	H	S/PS	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Aug
<i>Potentilla fissa</i> ^a	Leafy potentilla	M-H	PS	1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	?
<i>Potentilla verna</i> ^b	Spring potentilla	M-H	PS	< .5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Mar-May
<i>Pulsatilla patens</i> ^a	Pasque flower	M	S/PS	1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Mar-May
<i>Ratibida columnifera</i> ^a	Prairie coneflower	L-M	S	2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jul-Sep
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i> ^a	Black-eyed Susan	M-H	S	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jul-Sep
<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Cooking sage	L-M	S/PS	2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Jun
<i>Saxifraga hirsuta</i>	Saxifrage	H	S/PS	.5'+	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Jun
<i>Scutellaria brittonii</i> ^a	Skullcap	M	S/PS	.5 - 1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Aug-Sep
<i>Sedum</i> spp. ^b	Stonecrop	M	S/PS	1 - 1.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jul-Aug
<i>Sedum lanceolatum</i> ^a	Yellow stonecrop	M	S/PS	.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jul-Aug
<i>Sempervivum</i> sp.	Hens and chicks	L-M	S/PS	.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a
<i>Senecio spartioides</i> ^{ac}	Broom groundsel	VL-L	S	2 - 3'	Y	Y	?	?	?	Sep-Oct
<i>Solidago missouriensis</i> ^a	Smooth goldenrod	L-M	S	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Jul-Aug
<i>Thalictrum fendleri</i> ^a	Fendler meadowrue	H	S/PS	2 - 3'	?	?	Y	Y	Y	Jul-Aug
<i>Thermopsis divaricarpa</i> ^a	Spreading golden banner	M-H	S/PS	2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	May
<i>Tradescantia occidentalis</i> ^a	Western spiderwort	M	S/PS	1.5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Jun-Aug
<i>Thymus</i> spp. ^b	Thyme	L-M	S	< .5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Jul
<i>Veronica pectinata</i>	Speedwell	L-M	S	< .5'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Apr-Jul
<i>Vinca minor</i> ^b	Periwinkle, myrtle	H	Sh	< 1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Apr-Jun
<i>Waldsteinia</i> sp. ^b	Barren strawberry	M-H	Sh/PS	< 1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	May-Jun

Shrubs

<i>Arctostaphylos nevadensis</i> ^{ab}	Pinemat manzanita	M	S/PS	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	N	N	n/a
<i>Arctostaphylos patula</i> ^a	Greenleaf manzanita	M	S/PS	3 - 4'	Y	Y	Y	N	N	n/a
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> ^{ab}	Kinnikinnick, bearberry	M	S/Sh	1'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a
<i>Betula glandulosa</i> ^a	Bog birch	H	S/PS	6 - 8'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a
<i>Calluna</i> sp.	Heather	H	S/PS	2'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Jul-Aug
<i>Ceanothus fendleri</i> ^a	Buckbrush, mountain lilac	M	S	2'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Jul
<i>Cercocarpus intricatus</i> ^a	Little-leaf mountain mahogany	VL-L	S	4 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	n/a
<i>Cercocarpus montanus</i> ^{ac}	True mountain mahogany	L-M	S	4 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	n/a
<i>Chrysothamnus</i> spp. ^a	Rabbitbrush	VL-L	S	2 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jul-Aug
<i>Cornus stolonifera</i> ^a	Redtwig dogwood	H	S/Sh	4 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a
<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>	Spreading cotoneaster	M	S/PS	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	May-Jun
<i>Daphne burkwoodii</i>	Burkwood daphne	M	S/PS	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Apr-Jun
<i>Erica</i> sp.	Heath	H	S/PS	1'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Jan-Mar
<i>Euonymus alatus</i>	Burning bush euonymus	M	S/Sh	1 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	n/a
<i>Fallugia paradoxa</i> ^a	Apache plume	VL-L	S	2 - 4'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Oct
<i>Holodiscus dumosus</i> ^a	Ocean spray, cliff/rock spirea	L-M	S/PS	4'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun
<i>Jamesia americana</i> ^a	Wax flower	M-H	S/Sh	2 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun
<i>Lonicera tatarica</i>	Tatarian honeysuckle	M	S/PS	4 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Jun
<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	Oregon grape holly	M-H	S/Sh	4 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	May-Jun

Scientific Name	Common Name	Approx. Water Needs	Sun/Shade Preference	Approx. Mature Height	Elevation (1,000 ft.)					Approx. Bloom Month
					5	6	7	8	9	
<i>Mahonia repens</i> ^{ab}	Creeping grape holly	L-H	S/Sh	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Mar-May
<i>Philadelphus microphyllus</i> ^a	Little-leaf mockorange	M	S	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Jun
<i>Physocarpus monogynus</i> ^a	Mountain ninebark	M	S/Sh	2 - 4'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun
<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i> ^a	Shrubby cinquefoil	M	S/PS	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Sep
<i>Prunus besseyi</i> ^a	Western sand cherry	L-M	S	1 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	May
<i>Purshia tridentata</i> ^a	Antelope bitterbrush	L-M	S	1 - 2'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Jun-Aug
<i>Ribes aureum</i> ^a	Golden currant	M	S/PS	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Apr-May
<i>Rosa woodsii</i> ^a	Woods' or native wild rose	M	S/PS	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Jun-Jul
<i>Shepherdia canadensis</i> ^d	Russet buffaloberry	M-H	S	5 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a
<i>Symphoricarpos</i> spp. ^d	Snowberry, coralberry	M	S/PS	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a
<i>Viburnum edule</i> ^a	Highbush cranberry	H	S	6 - 8'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May-Jun
<i>Yucca baccata</i> ^a	Banana or broad-leaf yucca	VL-L	S/PS	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Jun
<i>Yucca filamentosa</i>	Adam's needle	M	S/PS	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Jun
<i>Yucca glauca</i> ^a	Spanish bayonet, small soapweed, Great Plains yucca	VL-L	S/PS	2 - 3'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Jun

Large Shrubs and Trees

<i>Acer ginnala</i>	Ginnala maple	M-H	S	6 - 10'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a
<i>Acer glabrum</i> ^a	Rocky Mountain maple	M-H	S/Sh	6 - 10'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a
<i>Acer grandidentatum</i> ^a	Wasatch maple	M	S/PS	10 - 20'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	n/a
<i>Alnus tenuifolia</i> ^a	Thinleaf alder	H	S/PS	6 - 8'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Apr
<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i> ^{ac}	Saskatoon alder-leaf serviceberry	M	S/PS	6 - 8'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Apr-May
<i>Amelanchier utahensis</i> ^a	Utah serviceberry	VL-M	S	4 - 6'	Y	Y	N	N	N	May
<i>Betula fontinalis</i> ^a	River birch	H	S/PS	6 - 8'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	n/a
<i>Cercocarpus ledifolius</i> ^a	Mountain mahogany	VL-L	S	6 - 15'	Y	Y	?	N	N	n/a
<i>Corylus cornuta</i> ^a	Filbert, beaked hazelnut	H	S/Sh	5 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	?	?	n/a
<i>Crataegus</i> spp. ^a	Hawthorn (several native)	M	S	6 - 8'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	May
<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	Green ash	M-H	S	20 - 25'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	n/a
<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	Honeylocust	M-H	S	60 - 70'	Y	Y	N	N	N	May
<i>Malus</i> sp.	Crabapple	M	S	10 - 15'	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Apr-May
<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> ^a	Tall ninebark	M	S/PS	4 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	?	N	May
<i>Populus tremuloides</i> ^a	Aspen	M	S	8 - 25'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n/a
<i>Prunus americana</i> ^a	American wild plum	M	S/PS	4 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Apr
<i>Prunus cerasifera</i> ^c	Flowering plum	M	S/PS	8 - 10'	Y	Y	Y	?	N	Apr
<i>Prunus pennsylvanica</i> ^{ac}	Pin/fire/wild/red cherry	M	S/PS	6 - 8'	Y	Y	Y	?	N	May
<i>Prunus virginiana melanocarpa</i> ^{ac}	Western chokecherry	M-H	S/PS	6 - 8'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Apr-May
<i>Rubus deliciosus</i> ^a	Boulder raspberry, thimbleberry	M	S/Sh	4 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Apr-May
<i>Salix amygdaloides</i> ^a	Peachleaf willow	H	S/PS	20 - 30'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	n/a
<i>Shepherdia argentea</i> ^a	Silver buffaloberry	M	S/PS	4 - 6'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Apr
<i>Sorbus scopulina</i> ^a	Western mountain ash	M-H	S/Sh	6 - 8'	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	May
<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>	Common lilac	M	S	6 - 8'	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	May

^a Native species.

^b Ground cover plant.

^c This species, or some species in this genus, may be poisonous to livestock, pets, wildlife and/or people under some conditions. Before planting, check with Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, Colorado State Forest Service, or other knowledgeable personnel.

^d Several species of *symphoricarpos* are native.

Plants for a FireWise Landscape

Plants that are more resistant to wildfire have one or more of the following characteristics:

- They grow without accumulating large amounts of combustible dead branches, needles or leaves (example: aspen).
- They have open, loose branches with a low volume of total vegetation (examples: currant and mountain mahogany).
- They have low sap or resin content (examples: many deciduous species).
- They have high moisture content (examples: succulents and some herbaceous species).
- They grow slowly and need little maintenance (do not need frequent pruning).
- They are short and grow close to the ground (examples: wildflowers and groundcovers).
- They can resprout following fire, thus reducing relandscaping costs (example: aspen).



Conifers

In Colorado, conifers make up much of our natural forest. Because of their high resin content, they are more susceptible to fire.

Even though conifers are flammable, you do not need to remove all of them from around your home. Wildfire hazards usually can be effectively reduced through proper thinning and pruning of existing trees and shrubs.

When choosing conifers for your defensible space, consider those with characteristics that make them better able to survive fire:

- thick bark,
- long needles, or
- self-pruning. (Self-pruning trees lose lower branches naturally, leaving a greater distance between ground and canopy.)

Additional FireWise Guidelines

Some additional tips to follow when planning a FireWise landscape include:

- Landscape according to the recommended defensible-space zones. The plants nearest your home should be more widely spaced and smaller than those farther away.
- Plant in small, irregular clusters and islands, not in large masses.
- Break up the continuity of the vegetation (fuel) with decorative rock, gravel and stepping stone pathways. This will help modify fire behavior and slow its spread across your property.
- Plant a variety of types and species. Besides being aesthetically pleasing, this will help ensure a healthier forest by reducing insects and diseases. Healthy, vigorous, thinned forests can better resist catastrophic fires than unhealthy ones with insect and disease problems.
- In the event of drought and water rationing, prioritize the plants you wish to save. Provide supplemental water to those nearest your home, perhaps using “gray water.”
 - Mulch to conserve moisture and reduce weed growth. Mulch can be organic (wood chips or small bark pieces) or inorganic (gravel or rock). Avoid pine bark, thick layers of pine needles or other materials that can easily carry fire.



Don't Forget Maintenance

A landscape is a dynamic, constantly changing system. Plants considered “fire resistant” and that have low fuel volumes can lose these characteristics over time. Your landscape, and the plants in it, must be maintained to retain their FireWise properties.



FIREWISE is a multi-agency program that encourages the development of defensible space and the prevention of catastrophic wildfire.

Be aware of the growth habits of the plants on your land and of the changes that occur seasonally. Keep a watchful eye for the need to reduce fuel volumes and fuel continuity.

- Remove annual, herbaceous plants after they have gone to seed or when the stems become overly dry.
- Rake up and dispose of litter as it builds up over the season.
- Mow or trim grasses to a low height within your defensible space. This is especially important as they begin to cure and dry.
- Remove plant parts damaged by snow, wind, frost or other agents.
- Timely pruning is critical. It not only reduces fuel volume but also maintains healthier plants with more succulent, vigorous growth.

Additional FireWise Publications

Cooperative Extension

The following publications are available from The Other Bookstore, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, 115 General Services Bldg., Fort Collins, CO 80523-4061; (970) 491-6198; resourcecenter@ucm.colostate.edu. Printed copies cost \$1; they are available free on our Web site at www.cerc.colostate.edu:

- 6.302, *Creating Wildfire-Defensible Zones*
- 6.303, *Fire-Resistant Landscaping*
- 6.304, *Fire Safety, Evacuation and Home Defense*
- 6.306, *Grass Seed Mixes for the Reduction of Wildfire Hazard*
- 7.205, *Pruning Evergreens*
- 7.206, *Pruning Shrubs*
- 7.207, *Pruning Deciduous Trees*
- 7.402, *Protecting Trees During Construction*

Colorado State Forest Service

The following publication is available from the Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523-5060; (970) 491-6303:

- *Home Fire Protection in the Wildland Urban Interface*, CSFS #142-399



This fact sheet was produced in cooperation with the Colorado State Forest Service.

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