

March 18, 2022

DRAFT

Happy spring 2022.

The TriCounty Firesafe Working Group (TCFSWG) was busy during 2021. TCFSWG. In partnership with the Montana City Volunteer Fire Department, began the first phase of a *firewise landscape demonstration* project at the Montana City Fire Station 1. The project is on the west side of Fire Station 1 and grant funding to date has been provided by Jefferson County, the Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC), and the US Forest Service (USFS).

What are *firewise* practices? They include construction materials, landscape design, and vegetation selection that help lower wildfire risk around the home. The term *firewise* or *fire resistant* refers to plants that are less flammable than others. The plants selected for the Montana City fire station are also drought tolerant and deer resistant. By demonstrating that less flammable vegetation creates attractive landscaping, the project seeks to inspire the community to examine fire and drought mitigation at their homes.

PHASE ONE

In 2021 approximately one-half acre of land west of the fire station was prepped for the demonstration project. The crested wheatgrass that occupied the land was stripped and the area was prepped for irrigation and planting. Irrigation was installed; a concrete border was installed to delineate the granite pathway. Fabric and decorative rock were spread on a portion of the area. A decomposed granite pathway was installed. The pathway is intended to be accessible to wheelchairs.

Valley Sand and Gravel, Gruber Excavating and Marks Lumber have generously donated material for the project including the decomposed granite and decorative rock.

A small grass area was seeded as well as the dry slope on the west side of the project. *Derek Hofer* from *Green Meadow Country Club* advised TCFSWG and generously provided seed for the grass areas. Two flower beds were planted using over 200 donated plants and volunteer labor from local Master Gardeners and friends.

PHASE TWO

Beginning in May 2022, TCFSWG will continue placing fabric, planting, and extending irrigation to the flower beds inside the concrete border. Decorative rock will fill in the planted areas.

Dowling Architects is designing a gazebo, benches and interpretive sign kiosks for the project. Steel donations are needed for this phase of the project. Volunteers are needed to help construct the gazebo, install benches and kiosks with interpretive signs. **See below how you can help.**

As funds and labor become available, trees and shrubs will be planted outside the concrete barrier and irrigation will be extended to the outlying plants. Plant identification plates will be placed on each plant species throughout the garden. Plaques will be placed on donated items and plants as requested.

A hearty thanks to *Tizer Gardens* for their generous donation of advice over the past year. Sadly, Richard Krott, owner of Tizer Gardens passed away in 2021. Fortunately for TCFSWG, Belva, Richard's wife, is continuing the advice and support for the project.

HOW YOU CAN HELP: community support

Volunteers have completed most of the work to date – roughly 200 hours. The community can continue to support this project by donating their time, or donating a plant or gift certificate through Tizer Gardens. Tizer Gardens has a list of needed plants.

Direct donations are welcome and can be mailed to **TCFSWG PO Box 934, Helena MT 59624**.

For those who might want to donate a tree, shrub or have a particular set of plants to donate in honor of a loved one, please consider doing so. A small plaque will be placed at the donated plant or other item (such as a donation toward a bench or kiosk) according to the donor's wishes.

TCFSWG will continue coordinating the work on the ground. Currently TCFSWG is seeking additional funding from a City of Helena grant, community businesses, and individuals. The grant money we have received is estimated to cover most of the materials needed for the project, but additional funding and volunteers will be necessary to provide plants, complete the planting and labor.

We will keep you informed as the project progresses. If you have any questions or would like to volunteer, please contact us through our social media contact information or Lois Olsen from TCFSWG. Lois can be reached through text at (406) 459-2542.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to personally thank you for your continued interest and support of making our communities *firewise*.

Sincerely,

Lois Olsen
Board member/Volunteer Project Coordinator
TriCounty Firesafe Working Group



1. Tree and shrub planting. Irrigation available. West side length ~ 172 ft S side 45 ft East side 45 ft
2. Herbaceous and shrub planting. Irrigation available. 55 ft long, 20 ft wide, opens to 8 ft wide
3. Rock & polyec in place. Irrigation available. 15 ft long, 7 ft wide
4. Rock & fabric in place