



International Society of Arboriculture

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

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From: The International Society of Arboriculture – Rocky Mountain Chapter

Wildfires Can Happen Anywhere

Tree & Landscaping Precautions For Reducing Wildfire Dangers

On June 26th, the “Last Chance” 38,000-acre prairie wildfire was finally 100% contained. Having burned for only four days, the fast-moving fire quickly destroyed at least four homes, 17 structures, and an untold number of prairie trees. That’s why it’s important for everyone to know that wildfires are not limited to our forests and mountain areas. Just a spark, which is what started the Last Chance fire, can grow quickly when fueled by dry grasses and shrubs.

What’s important to know is that dry grasses and shrubs, located underneath a tree’s canopy, can literally act like fire kindling. Think about how we start a campfire. We first light the smaller pieces of wood to get the bigger logs burning, That’s why you should keep all grasses mowed from underneath trees to outside the width of the tree’s widest branches. Then prune back or remove any dead shrubs within a wide radius of the tree. Also be sure that any low-hanging tree branches, that are 6-10 feet from the ground, are safely removed.

“Wildfire doesn’t have to burn everything in its path,” says Colorado Firewise Advisor and International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist, Keith Worley. He added, “In fact, cleaning your property of debris and maintaining your landscaping are important first steps.”

What you can do to reduce your home or property from becoming fuel for a wildfire:

- 1) Keep the grasses underneath trees mowed and shrubs pruned or removed.
- 2) Prune all of the lowest branches of trees that are 6 to 10 feet from the ground.
- 3) Clear leaves and other debris from gutters, eaves, porches and decks.
- 4) Create a “fuel-free” area within 5 feet from your home and any structures.
- 5) Remove dead vegetation from under decks and within 10 feet of any structures.
- 6) Remove flammable materials from within 30 feet of your home and any structures.
- 7) Dispose of any debris and lawn cuttings quickly and appropriately.
- 8) Keep lawns hydrated because dry grass and shrubs are fuel for wildfire.

If your area has been placed on alert, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) can provide a number of resources, including simple, but effective, steps that homeowners can do now, ahead of the approaching or potential wildfire to help reduce the chances of property damage. Learn more about how to keep your family safe and reduce your home’s risk for wildfire damage on the Firewise website www.firewise.org.

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Media Notes:

- 1) Firewise is a key program and a part of the overall Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) initiative that encourages everyone in a community, including homeowners, firefighters, land managers, and civic leaders to learn their role and work together to prepare in advance of a wildfire threat. More information about FAC and how homeowners can play an important role in reducing wildfire damage to homes and property, can found at: www.fireadapted.org.
- 2) The International Society of Arboriculture – Rocky Mountain Chapter (ISA-RMC) headquarters is located in Denver, CO. They represent the four states of Montana, Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico. You can learn more at www.ISARMC.org.

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