

## Fire-Resistant Landscaping

A fire-resistant landscape isn't necessarily the same thing as a well-maintained yard. This type of landscape uses fire-resistant plants that are strategically planted to resist the spread of fire to your home. Proper placement and on-going maintenance of fire-resistant trees, for example, can help protect your home by blocking intense heat.

### What are Fire-Resistant Plants?

Fire-resistant plants don't readily ignite from a flame or other ignition sources. Although fire-resistant plants can be damaged or even killed by fire, their foliage and stems do not contribute significantly to the fuel and, therefore, the intensity of a fire.

### Choose Fire-Resistant Plants and Materials

- Create fire-resistant zones with stone walls, patios, decks, and roadways.
- Use rock, flower beds, and gardens as ground cover for bare spaces and as effective firebreaks.
- There are no "fire-proof" plants. Select high-moisture plants that grow close to the ground and have a low sap or resin content.
- Choose fire-retardant plant species that resist ignition such as rockrose, ice plant, and aloe.
- Select fire-resistant shrubs such as hedging roses, bush honeysuckles, currant, cotoneaster, sumac, and shrub apples.
- Plant hardwood, maple, poplar, and cherry trees that are less flammable than pine, fir, and other conifers.

There is a wide array of trees and plants to choose for your landscape that are both attractive and fire-resistant. For a diverse list of fire-resistant plants, <https://tinyurl.com/yy47jhl3>.

### A Caution About Bark Mulch:

Bark mulch is often used in home landscapes. However, fire brands from a wildfire and cigarettes can ignite dry bark mulch, conveying the fire to your home. If you landscape with bark mulch up against your home, make sure it remains moist to prevent ignition.



## Fire-Resistant Plants



Ice Plant is a very low-growing ground cover with succulent, green foliage.

PHOTO: ALVES GASP, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Any Coreopsis plant is popular due to its tolerance to a wide variety of soil types.

PHOTO: DOCENT JOYCE, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Lavender is a fire resistant plant that thrives in dry growing conditions.

PHOTO: KEN PEI, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

## Himalayan Blackberry Maintenance

Invasive weeds, such as Himalayan Blackberry, are common ladder fuels for wildfire. Not only are these plants highly flammable and quick spreading, they pose ecological problems when they out-compete native vegetation. Maintaining Himalayan Blackberry on your property can help decrease the chances of fire spread.

### Himalayan Blackberry Identification and Quick Facts:

- 5 leaflets per leaf; canes have thorns; are ribbed and square in cross-section.
- Thickets often reach 6 feet or more in height; brambles (canes) can grow 3 feet or more in length in one season.
- Spreads via underground burls, runners and tiprooting from canes; quickly occupies disturbed areas.
- Less vigorous in shade; can't survive in deep shade.
- Flammable due in part to accumulation of dead material in thickets; burns well in winter.
- Fuels reduction objective: Eliminate when possible.



Himalayan blackberry is aggressive and quickly occupies cleared or disturbed areas. Don't delay in planting or seeding such sites with fast-growing native vegetation before new blackberry starts get established. Maintaining heavy shade reduces the vigor of existing plants and prevents new plants from getting established.

Manual removal of Himalayan blackberry can be an effective control option, but it is labor intensive and often a difficult and painful process. Cut large plants at ground level and remove root crowns and large lateral roots. It is important to remove as much of the root system as possible to prevent regrowth. This method will need regular follow-up to remove new growth and seedlings. While effective, this process heavily disturbs soil and increases the erosion potential of a site. This method is not recommended on steep or unstable soils.

### Recommended Tools:

- **Spade/grub hoe:** Dig out plants including the root mass when soils are moist.
- **Brush hog:** Not effective as a standalone treatment but can be used with other treatments such as goats.
- **Brushcutters, hedge trimmers, loppers:** Repeatedly cut back vegetation early in the growing season. Subsequent cuttings are at flowering or when the plant has grown back to around 18 inches high.