

## Don't Fuel the Fire

Nearly every state has experienced fires that rage out of control in the landscape. While the largest and most devastating burn in the West, fires also spread in the East and South where suburb meets country, or housing development meets conservation land.

### Homeowners can protect their properties in two ways:

- design and maintain a landscape that discourages fires;
- build with flame-resistant materials.

“Fires need fuel, such as dead trees, shrubs and grasses,” says Tchukki Andersen, BCMA, staff arborist with the Tree Care Industry Association. “While no landscape is fireproof, there are steps you should take to reduce the danger.”

### The Tree Care Industry Association offers these tips for your landscape to combat wildfires.

- If you are in a wildfire fire-prone area, reduce the amount of fuel around your home. Your landscape needs an area of reduced fuels between your home and undeveloped land. This provides enough distance between a building and a fire to ensure that your home will more likely survive without firefighters.
- All dead branches that may hang over the roof should be removed. Leaves, needles and other dead vegetation should not be allowed to build up on the roof or in gutters.
- In parts of the country where wildfires are rare, an area of well-irrigated vegetation should extend at least 30 feet from your home on all sides. In high-hazard areas, a clearance of between 50 and 100 feet or more may be necessary – especially on downhill sides of the lot.
- Further from the house, install low-growing shrubs. When planting trees, space them at least 10 feet apart. A professional arborist should be contacted to remove larger broken or dead limbs higher in the tree. Careful pruning preserves a tree's appearance, enhances structural integrity and assists in the plant's ability to resist fire.
- The lower limbs of tall shade trees should be pruned 6 feet above the ground. Beyond 100 feet from the house, dead wood and older trees should be removed or thinned by qualified professionals.

“As a general rule, the healthier the tree, the more likely it is to survive a fire,” explains Andersen. “In addition to pruning, a professional arborist can recommend fertilization, soil management, disease treatment or pest control measures to promote healthy trees. Landscape design and maintenance are also important factors in a home's survival.”

### Find a professional

A professional arborist can assess your landscape and work with you in creating a safer, more fire-resistant landscape. Contact the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), a public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture since 1938. It has more than 2,000 member companies who recognize stringent safety and performance standards and who are required to carry liability insurance. TCIA has the nation's only Accreditation program that helps consumers find tree care companies that have been inspected and accredited based on: adherence to industry standards for quality and safety; maintenance of trained, professional staff; and dedication to ethics and quality in business practices. An easy way to find a tree care service provider in your area is to use the “Locate Your Local TCIA Member Companies” program. You can use this service by calling 1-800-733-2622 or by doing a ZIP Code search on [www.treecaretips.org](http://www.treecaretips.org).

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TCIA arborists, safety and business professionals are also available as sources for tree related articles and issues: 1-800-733-2622 or [andersen@tcia.org](mailto:andersen@tcia.org).*