

# Cut down chance of disaster with landscaping

By Kym Pokorny  
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CORVALLIS — Drawing a line around the house with fire-resistant landscapes can mean the difference between a home consumed by flames and one left standing.

“Fire specialists love to show us pictures of houses where people took precautions,” said Brad Withrow-Robinson, forester with Oregon State University’s Extension Service. “I’ve seen umpteen photos of land charred all around and a little house left standing in the middle. Not always, but often.”

This year could be a bad one for people who live in rural areas or on rural-urban boundaries, he said. “We’ve had a very dry, warm spring and all the fire predictions from Oregon Department of Forestry are indicating the potential for a big fire year,” Withrow-Robinson said. “This year would be the year to be thoughtful about the defensible space near the house.”

To help create that, OSU Extension developed a guide to fire-resistant landscape plants for the Willamette Valley, which you can now download free as an app for iOS and Android phones. The 190-page publication also comes as a mobile-friendly or printable PDF.

Co-author Brooke Edmunds, a horticulturist with OSU’s Extension Service, said the guide features 170 plants that thrive in the Willamette Valley. Plants are organized into ground-covers, perennials, vines, shrubs and trees. Icons indicate what level of water and sun a plant

needs, as well as other details such as deer-resistance, and if it attracts bees, butterflies or birds. Height, width and hardiness information and other descriptions are also included.

“No plant is fire-proof,” Edmunds said, “but some are considered fire resistant.”

In general, these would be plants with more supple leaves without a waxy or resinous surface. Other plants to avoid are those that accumulate a lot of dry branches or needles.

Some of the plants featured in the guide are:

**Carnation (Dianthus):** An evergreen ground-cover that grows 6 to 9 inches tall and 15 inches wide, has pink flowers that appear in June and July and is hardy in zones 3-9. It takes partial to full sun, attracts birds and butterflies and grows well in rock gardens.

**Tickseed (Coreopsis):** A perennial with yellow, orange, maroon or red flowers that bloom March through November if kept deadheaded. The blossoms entice butterflies and the seeds are attractive to birds. Grow in part to full sun in well-drained soil. Hardy in zones 3-9.

**Delphinium:** A perennial that prefers well-drained soil and grows upright to 2 feet and gets 18 to 36 inches wide. The blue, pink, purple or white flowers bloom in March and April. Delphiniums take partial to full sun and need well-drained soil. Hardy in zones 5-9.

**Daphne (D. x burkwoodii):** A 3- to 5-foot, semi-evergreen shrub with highly fragrant white to pink flowers that bloom in May and June and attract butterflies. This plant needs partial shade and



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Coreopsis is a hardy, long-blooming perennial considered fire resistant.

well-drained soil with a neutral pH. Hardy in zones 4-8.

**Black oak (Quercus velutina):** A deciduous tree with a spreading crown and good fall color. Grows 50 to 60 feet tall and wide. The diminutive flowers in March through May appeal to birds and butterflies. Acorns attract wildlife. Grows in full sun and is drought tolerant. Hardy in zones 3-9.

The guide is a spin-off of the 48-page Fire-resistant Plants for Home Landscapes, which was written by Amy Jo Detweiler, an Extension horticulturist, and Stephen Fitzgerald, an Extension forester, and produced in collaboration with Washington State University and Idaho State University. It highlights plants appropriate for all areas of the Northwest.

In addition to planting fire-resistant plants, Edmunds recommends the following precautions:

- Move plants, especially flammable ones, away from the house.
- Clean up dead brush and debris and move firewood away from buildings.

- Trim trees and shrubs to keep them about 10 feet from each other.

- Use non-flammable mulch such as rocks near the house.

- Have irrigated zones around the home’s perimeter.

- Clean off debris from roof and gutters.

- Remove lawn close to the house or keep it closely cropped and watered.

Keep potted plants well-irrigated.

# Construction begins on Oregon State Bend campus

BEND (AP) — Construction is under way to build an Oregon State University campus in Bend that was delayed for a year by legal challenges.

The *Bend Bulletin* reports residents concerned about the impact the campus would have on community traffic have seen their legal challenges denied by city and state officials as well as an independent hearings officer.

The group has filed an appeal with the state supreme court. OSU began construction at the site this week.

OSU-Cascades Vice President Becky Johnson said further court challenges would only mean small changes to the university’s plans.

Campus capacity will be less than 2,000 students. The purchase of nearby land would allow an expansion for 5,000 more to enroll.

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