

# GROW Home, Garden & Outdoors

## A CIRCLE OF SAFETY Protecting your home from wildfires

**Wildfire does not have to consume everything in its path. The more a homeowner can accomplish before fire season, the more it will improve a home's chances of surviving a wildfire.**

EO Media Group

**A**cross the state, fire officials are marking Oregon Wildfire Awareness Month in May by spreading the word on ways to make homes – especially in the tinder-dry wildland areas – safer in the event of wildfires.

The Oregon Department of Forestry, Keep Oregon Green, the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal and fire educators statewide predict this could be the driest fire season in 25 years.

“In a large fire event, firefighters may not have the capacity or resources to defend every home. Just as you lock the doors to keep your home and family safe, think of creating a fuel-free defensible space around your home to

reduce fire danger and provide safe access to firefighters so they can protect it,” said Kristin Babbs, president of the Keep Oregon Green Association.

Experts say the worst culprits are a wildfire’s hot embers, which can travel through the air a mile or more ahead of a wildfire. If they come to rest in leaf debris on the roof or in flammable plants in the home landscape, they can smolder and ignite.

“You can’t control where these embers land, but you can control what happens when they do,” Babbs said.

She offers the following tips:  
**CLEAN:** The best place to start is with the house and the first 30 feet that extends from the outermost part of the house, including detached garages and sheds. The roof is the most vulnerable part of the home.

Regularly clear leaves or needles from the roof and gutters, and cut back tree limbs that overhang the roof.

**CLEAR:** Remove any combustible natural or human debris, such as leaves, branches, and gas or paint cans that tend to collect near the home, under stairs, decks, and porches.

Also important: Relocate firewood at least 30 feet from the home or store it in an enclosed shed.

**LANDSCAPE:** Landscaping should contain low-growing, fire-resistant plants that are spaced carefully so as not to lead a fire to the home.

Rake leaves and debris from the yard, mow grass, prune trees six to 10 feet up from the ground, and keep plants well watered to prevent a surface fire from climbing into the crowns and carrying flames from trees to the house.

Properly placed deciduous

trees can actually protect a home by blocking a wildfire’s intense heat.

Fuel breaks, such as driveways, gravel walkways, and green lawns can stop the advance of a fire by starving it of flammable vegetation.

In the zone 100 to 200 feet from the home, trees may need to be thinned, though less intensively than those closer in, so canopies are not touching.

Wildfire does not have to consume everything in its path. The more a homeowner can accomplish before fire season, the more it will improve a home’s chances of surviving a wildfire.

“It’s peace of mind knowing that if you leave your home for a stretch of time, it will still be standing when you return,” Babbs said.

More tips on how to create defensible space around

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### Magic Garden receives Soroptimist grant

By Stephen Tool  
 Wallowa County Chieftain

Soroptimist International of Wallowa County awarded the Magic Garden its yearly “Large Grant” of \$4,272 during an April 9 luncheon. The grant is for the purpose of creating a certified commercial kitchen.

Robin Martin, team leader of the Magic Garden Project Ministry Team, accepted the award on behalf of the Magic Garden, which is a community garden joint effort with the Joseph United Methodist Church and Joseph Charter School. The commercial kitchen will be located in the church.

The Magic Garden plans a variety of community uses for its planned commercial kitchen, including a “Friday Soup Kitchen” for the benefit of fi-



From left: Soroptimist International Large Grant chair, Sue Coppin, poses for a photo with Magic Garden Project Ministry team leader Robin Martin. The Soroptimists presented Martin with a \$4,272 check for the purpose of obtaining appliances for a commercial kitchen at Joseph United Methodist Church.  
 Courtesy photo

nancially struggling families. Other beneficiaries include small businesses with an interest in commercial food production along with community cooking and food preservation classes. Anyone in Wallowa County is eligible to use the kitchen.

“This is a real good thing because we need \$26,000 just for the appliances, but this got us started. We already have enough

money to build the building from church people,” Martin said.

The grant application stated that current commercial kitchen availability in the county is expensive and inadequate.

The Magic Garden had counted on acquiring a grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust, but MMT is currently in hiatus while reorganizing the program. Martin also said with enough letters of community support, a Wildhorse Foundation grant lies within the realm of possibility. Magic Garden is also currently working on smaller grants, Martin said.

Sue Coppin, large grant chair for the Soroptimists, expressed pleasure at her organization’s opportunity to help fund the kitchen. “The whole purpose of our Large Grant is to take one project every year and really make a difference with it.”

Coppin said part of the criteria for choosing the grant is that it betters the lives of women. “Robin’s whole project has the potential of improving the lives of women in the community,” she said.



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