

Firewise / Defensible Space Frequently Asked Questions

3/27/2025

1. What is Firewise?

Firewise is the challenge of communities that live in fire prone areas. The goal is to create conditions that reduce the damage of wildfires and the damages they present. It is a multi-agency program that encourages the development of defensible and survivable spaces for the prevention of wildfires.

2. What is a Defensible Space?

Defensible Space is the area between a structure and wildfires. This can include vegetation that has been modified. This is an important concept to protect homeowners and firefighters. A Defensible Space can include hardscaping, driveways, walkways, patios, parking areas and fencing.

3. What is a Survivable Space?

A Survivable Space is the modification and maintenance of landscape design, fuels, and building materials that can lessen the threat of wildfire damage.

4. Are there plants that are better for a Defensible Space?

There are plants that can help reduce the spread of wildfire, however, they may require more water.

- [Firewise Landscape](#) (defines landscape defensible zones)
- [Fire-Resistant and Fire-Prone Plants Common to Yavapai County](#). YC #34 (lists common Yavapai County plants)

5. How does a homeowner create a Defensible Space?

There are 3 management zones for Defensible Spaces:

- **Immediate Zone:** 0-5 feet is the area starting at the structure. Fuels in this zone should exclude dry grass, stacked fuelwood, ladder fuels and fire-prone plants such as juniper. It can include low-growing, spreading ground covers, succulents, low-growing perennials/shrubs.
- **Intermediate Zone:** 5-30 feet from the structure. If there is any slope, the distance of this zone increases as the slope increases. This can include taller shrubs with no to low resin, short native or non-native trees spaced 10 feet apart from edges, grasses cut down at end of season, perennials, wildflowers- cut down at end of season
- **Extended Zone:** the area beyond the Intermediate Zone, to the property line. This can include larger trees and shrubs. Trees (including natives) should be limbed-up & dead material removed

6. What are the 4 biggest Wildfire Behavior Factors?

1. Topography - lay of the property
 2. Weather - wind speed, relative humidity, and ambient temperature
 3. Fuel - vegetation and man-made structures
 4. Human behavior - people building in high hazard fire areas and inadequate water supplies, etc.
- www.Firewise.org

7. What is the best mulch to use in Firewise Landscaping?

Inorganic materials such as gravel, granite and rocks are the best materials to use, especially next to a structure.

[Comparing the Ignitability of Mulch Materials for a Firewise Landscape](#) AZ 1440

8. How can I help make my neighborhood Firewise?

A community must meet a set of voluntary criteria on an annual basis.

[Firewise USA](#)

9. Does being in a Firewise Community affect my Homeowner's Insurance?

Homeowners need to check with their insurance companies to see how being in a Firewise Community can affect their rates.

10. Are there resources to help homeowners with risk assessment of their property?

Yes, there are resources to help with risk assessments.

[Yavapai County Community Resources](#)

11. Is financial assistance available to help homeowners create a Firewise Landscape?

Yes, there are grants available through various agencies.

[Community Resources](#)

12. Will someone come to my home and provide guidance on what I should do to create defensible space?

Yes, people are available to do risk assessments.

[Community Resources](#)

13. Is there a list of Defensible Space Contractors?

Yes, there is a list of Defensible Space Contractors.

[Defensible Space Contractors](#)

14. Is there anything a homeowner can do to let fire-fighters know how many people and pets could be in the home?

Yes, local fire departments have cards that can be placed by the front door/window that indicate who lives in the home including pets and an emergency phone number. Amazon and Chewy also sell similar items on their websites.

15. Is there a way to receive notifications on wildfire situations in my area?

Yavapai County has an emergency notification system.

<https://www.ycsoaz.gov/I-Want-To/Services/Sign-up-for-Emergency-Notifications>

Some cities/towns also have their own notification systems; you should check with them as well.