

Idaho Firewise Garden

1. Turf Plots/Green Roof:



- Traditional **turf** is a great firewise choice for the landscape as long as it is being maintained regularly (mowed/watered).
- Many lawns in Idaho use cool season turf. One of the most popular cool season lawn choices is Kentucky Bluegrass - however, it is not waterwise and will need heavy amounts of water to stay green during the summer. There are many other turf choices for homeowners to consider.
- The 12 turf plots (W to E) range in water needs from water-thirsty Kentucky Blue Grass to very drought tolerant warm season grasses.
- The **green roof** and the plants close by depict the most firewise plants of all - low-growing, easy maintenance, high-moisture content plants. **E.g.** dianthus, sedums and other succulents, deciduous groundcovers, dwarf statured forbs, limited shrubs/trees, no conifers.
- **Immediate Zone (1), 0-5'** includes the home itself and the first five feet - use rock mulch and high moisture firewise plants only.

2. Deciduous Groundcovers, High Moisture or Soap Content:



- Firewise groundcovers cover a lot of space without adding height. The advantage of using groundcovers is "less fuel for the fire" all while adding textural interest and color. Groundcovers are a great competitor for invasive weeds such as annual cheatgrass and medusahead.
- **Examples** of perennial groundcovers: giant flowered soapwort, perennial geranium, cacti, ice plant, pineleaf penstemon
- **Shrub examples** appropriate for groundcover use: 'Pawnee Buttes' sand cherry, Colorado manzanita
- *High moisture and soap content* plants are very difficult to burn!
- **Examples** of high moisture or soap content plants: assorted sedums and succulents, yucca, giant flowered soapwort, dianthus

3. Native Plants, Low-Growing Shrubs, Dwarf 'Cultivars':



- A part of the design focus for the Idaho Firewise Garden is to utilize natives as much as possible. Native plants are adapted to our soil and climate conditions, they often are drought tolerant, and they support other important factors such as healthy bird populations and beneficial pollinators.
- *Caution: not all native plants are firewise as many are quite flammable!* Keep **flammable native plants in Zone 3 and beyond** and only keep healthy specimens. **E.g.** sagebrush, bitterbrush, apache plume, native salvia, yarrow, tall structured native grasses, etc.
- Many native shrubs can get quite large. Dwarf 'cultivars' of native shrubs are a better fit for firewise landscaping and have been utilized throughout the garden. These smaller shrubs are a better firewise choice while retaining the traits of their native parentage.
- Look for these dwarf 'cultivars' of native plants: 'Gro-Low' sumac, 'Regent' serviceberry

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4. Firewise Landscaping:



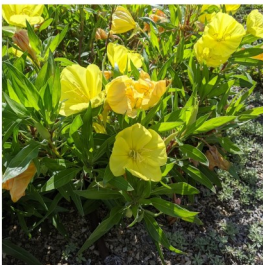
Recommendations for the Intermediate Zone (2), 5-30':

- Remove "ladder fuels" - fires that can easily travel from fuel to fuel (grasses to shrubs to tops of trees)
- Incorporate rock mulch and utilize hardscapes within the landscape
- Plant in small clusters to break up continuity of vegetation

Attributes of Firewise Plants:

- High in moisture, soap (saponins), pectin, and/or latex content
- Smaller in size
- Minimal amounts of volatile oils and resins
- Usually can withstand some amount of drought

5. Plant Chemistry Matters:



Land clockwise:

- *Campanula* genus, bellflower - **latex** content, high moisture, many cultivars available
- *Dianthus* genus, pinks - **soap** content, xeric, can be utilized as groundcover
- 'Regent' *Amelanchier*, dwarf serviceberry - **pectin** content, dwarf relative of native shrub, supports wildlife
- *Oenothera macrocarpa*, evening primrose - high **moisture** content throughout the season even during the hottest months, useful groundcover

6. Extended Zone (3):



Recommendations for the Extended Zone (3), 30-100'+:

- Dispose of heavy accumulations of ground litter/debris
- Remove vegetation adjacent to any outbuildings
- Remove dead plant and tree material
- If flammable native plant material is present, limit their numbers and keep only healthy specimens

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7. Native Shrub - Snowberry:



- *Symphoricarpos* genus, snowberry - native to much of N. America
- High saponin/soap content in leaves and berries
- Pectin content, berries
- Useful as a sun shrub and can tolerate shade
- Low maintenance, prune periodically to retain shape
- The Idaho Firewise Garden is host to the common snowberry (white-berries) as well as a dwarf pink-berry cultivar ('Kolmcan' snowberry)
- **Disclaimer:** the snowberry is more appropriate for firewise landscaping in **Southern Idaho**. In the cooler and wetter climates of Idaho, the snowberry will sucker and spread more rapidly than may be desirable.

8. Southwest US Native Shrub/Small Tree - Desert Willow:



- *Chilopsis linearis*, desert willow - despite the common name given because of its willow-like leaves, this plant is in the Bignoniaceae family (related to the *Catalpa* tree and trumpet vine) and not a willow at all.
- Sun loving, exceedingly drought tolerant, the desert willow blooms profusely during the hottest parts of the summer which coincides with Idaho's fire season. Flowers are full of moisture - therefore very difficult to burn!

9. Vines, Latex Content, Test Garden for Southern Idaho:



- Grapevines are a recommended **vine** for firewise landscaping due to their high moisture content, pectin content, prolific berries, and large leaves. Regularly prune during late dormancy for best performance.
- *Euphorbia* genus, spurge - high **latex** and moisture content, **gardener's caution if allergic to latex!** Excellent resistance to ignition, many reliable, non-invasive cultivars available from reputable nurseries.
- As well as being a demonstration garden for Southern Idaho, the Idaho Firewise Garden is also a **test garden**. We test for plant suitability for firewise landscaping and assess the plant species each year for health and performance. Our plants grow in native soils - no amendments or fertilizers have been added to the soil.

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10. Plant Alternatives:



Plant this, not that!

- Instead of flammable arborvitae... plant **'Ron Williams' Fine Line® Buckthorn** for a very similar look. This shrub is loaded with tiny flowers in spring that attract pollinators.
- Instead of creeping juniper on steep slopes... plant **'Autumn Amber' Sumac** - a tough, spreading shrub useful for slope stabilization and showcases beautiful fall color.

11. Sulphur Buckwheat, Sage:



- *Eriogonum umbellatum*, sulphur buckwheat - a very xeric, **firewise native plant** that can be utilized as groundcover or a stand alone specimen. Remove flower stalks down to the foliage in fall, do not attempt to make pruning cuts on the wood.
- *Salvia pachyphylla*, sage - this an example of a **flammable native plant** that has been left in the garden - please touch this plant! What indicates that this plant is not firewise? The heavy fragrance of the leaves indicates a HIGH oil content. We have limited its numbers in the garden to just 1 specimen and it gets pruned every season to limit excess material.

12. Mock Orange (Syringa):



- *Philadelphus* genus, mock orange or as local Idahoans call it, Syringa
- *Philadelphus lewisii*, Idaho's state flower!
- High **saponin/soap** content, blooms in early June, the common name of mock orange refers to the citrus scent of the flowers
- The Idaho Firewise Garden has over a dozen different cultivars of *Philadelphus*. The dwarf cultivars have proven superior to the straight species in our sunny, hot location.

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13. Plants for Steep Slopes:



- To stabilize **steep slopes** and create a defense against wildfire and soil erosion, plant deep-rooted woody shrubs, high moisture groundcovers, and/or perennial flowers that are drought tolerant.
- The Idaho Firewise staff recognizes that this area of the garden has gotten overgrown! To be more 'firewise', on-going maintenance is being done to reduce overcrowding of plants – *remember to provide spacing between groupings of plants to reduce continuous fuels.*

14. Pectin Content:



- The end of summer into the beginning of cooler fall months is still considered fire season in Idaho. Until fall rain arrives, landscaping for fire-safety and garden maintenance is still a priority.
- Plants with **pectin** content are beautiful in late summer and fall and provide shelter and food for wildlife.
- *L and clockwise:* cotoneaster, Douglas hawthorn, grape, rose, Columbia hawthorn, Fendler's barberry

15. Four Seasons in the Garden:



- Early spring highlights: bulbs, early-blooming shrubs, *Euphorbia*, *Vinca*, *Antennaria*, crabapple
- To see the garden at its most beautiful with many plants blooming at once, visit the Idaho Firewise Garden between **mid-May to mid-June**. Late spring into summer blooms include red hot pokers, roses, ice plant, penstemon, evening primrose, mock orange, etc.
- Mid- to late summer highlights: *Sedum*, *Echinacea*, *Rudbeckia*, desert willow, *Mirabilis*
- Fall colors are abundant in the garden: burning bush, 'Autumn Amber' sumac, 'Gro-Low' sumac, Columbia hawthorn, 'Purpurea' grape, 'Pawnee Buttes' sand cherry, and the various pectin content plants mentioned in #14.
- Winter is slow in the garden - when snow is on the ground, the Idaho Firewise staff move indoors to take care of greenhouse propagation of firewise plant material for the garden, our satellite garden sites, and our various partners.