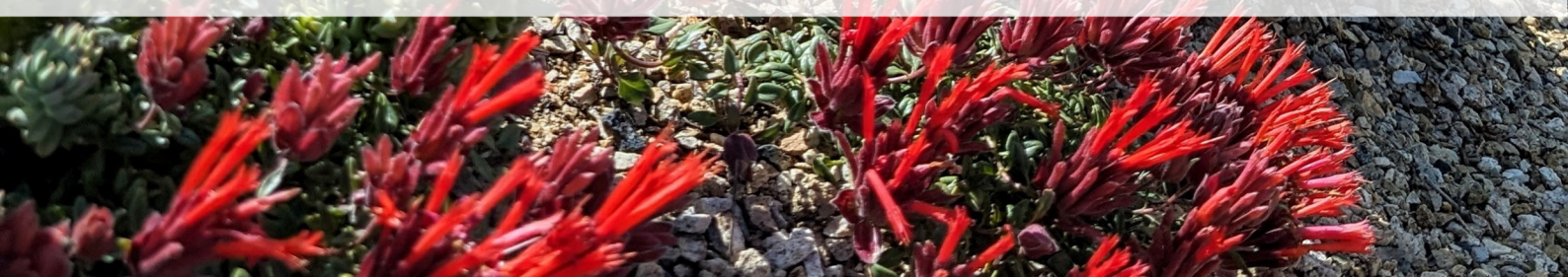




# NEWSLETTER

late summer 2024







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Camille Eells – Horticulturist,  
Idaho Firewise Garden Assistant

Michelle Williams –  
Horticulturist, Idaho Firewise  
Garden Assistant

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the fire season of 2024, it's impossible to ignore the intensity of the wildfires that swept across Idaho and the greater Pacific Northwest. This summer, many communities experienced firsthand the devastating impacts of prolonged drought, extreme heat, and increasingly unpredictable fire behavior. Idaho communities saw lengthy whole town evacuations, smoke impacts, property losses, and seemingly endless hits to local economies and business as fire altered all our collective summer recreation plans. The scale and severity of these wildfires were a stark reminder of how critical our mission has become.

At Idaho Firewise, our summer was marked by some pretty big changes. Brett Van Paepeghem, our South Idaho Program Manager retired at the end of May and longtime employee Andrea Dorman stepped into his role. We welcomed Shelby Saylor Struhs, Community Programs Coordinator to our team, and we are excited for the new Community Ambassador Partnership that she is spearheading that you'll read more about in the coming pages. We had two seasonal employees who spent the summer working alongside Andrea; Camille Eells and Michelle Williams. We spent weeks immersed in the "breath of fresh air" that the youth conservation corps crew members brought to our projects. We also saw a surge in requests for help from homeowners and landowners seeking ways to protect their properties as they observed the impacts that wildfires were having all across our state. The desire to participate in our programs is at an all-time high, and we responded by providing defensible space education, completing parcel and community level property assessments, and facilitating community-driven mitigation projects, all while working to foster a deeper understanding of wildfire's role in our ecosystems.

In the face of such a dramatic season, there is reason for hope. We've seen incredible examples of collaboration and communities coming together with remarkable resilience. People want to make changes and are talking about real action they can take to become more wildfire adapted.

As we move forward, we're more committed than ever to educating, equipping, and empowering communities to live safely with wildfire. Together, we can continue to build on the progress we've made, creating landscapes that are more resilient to wildfire and healthier for generations to come.

Thank you for being part of our work.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ivy".





## Expanding Wildfire Preparedness with Community Ambassadors

We launched the Community Ambassador Partnership (CAP) on our website in June 2024. Through this program we aim to extend our Firewise efforts into more Idaho communities by building a statewide network of individuals passionate about wildfire resilience.

The CAP program will serve as an additional platform for spreading wildfire education and empowering Idahoans to take active steps in reducing their wildfire risk. By increasing the number of people having on-the-ground conversations about wildfire preparedness, we can reach a broader audience. Our goal is to leverage local knowledge and leadership by engaging Ambassadors who are eager to bring Firewise principles into their communities and share their journey with others in the network, inspiring more people to take action.

Looking ahead, we expect the CAP program to evolve to meet the unique needs of its participants. We welcome feedback from current and potential Ambassadors on their community's specific wildfire concerns, so we can develop initiatives that address those issues. Future goals include offering workshops on topics such as conducting home risk assessments and evacuation planning, as well as hosting in-person networking events to bring Ambassadors and wildfire professionals together.

## BRING WILDFIRE EDUCATION TO YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD



## JOIN OUR COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR PARTNERSHIP

While we won't require time commitments for participation in the CAP program, we do want to track volunteer hours dedicated to wildfire preparedness activities. At a minimum, we hope the CAP program will provide a framework for action and open a line of communication amongst Idahoans as they take steps towards becoming wildfire adapted. We invite you, our reader, to join the CAP program and to recommend it to others who are passionate about wildfire preparedness. For more information, visit our website at [idahofirewise.org](https://idahofirewise.org) and click "Get Involved"

## Volunteer Spotlight: Cindy Clark



"The reason I enjoy being a volunteer at the Eagle Firewise Garden is because I'm fascinated with beautiful and unique ways to landscape in our desert sagebrush-steppe environment. I appreciate learning about home landscaping that uses little water, provides wildlife habitat, and is a low-combustion zone during a wildfire." - Cindy Clark

Volunteer with Idaho Firewise:  
<https://idahofirewise.org/volunteer/>



## Facilitating the Future: Our Summer With The CBYCC

This summer, we served as facilitators for the Clearwater Basin Youth Conservation Corps (CBYCC). The CBYCC is a paid work opportunity that introduces 16- to 18-year-olds to natural resource careers by partnering with state and federal agencies and local organizations to complete conservation projects benefiting communities in North-Central Idaho. This year's program spanned eight weeks, with crews established in six areas: Grangeville, Pierce, Orofino, Kamiah, Kooskia, and the Palouse (Troy, Moscow, and Deary).

The CBYCC employment opportunity is made possible by the Clearwater Economic Development Association (CEDA). Through a professional services agreement, CEDA brought Idaho Firewise on board to assist with program marketing and recruitment, provide training for crew members and leaders, and offer logistical support for the season's project schedule and end-of-season activities. In our role, we worked closely not only with the 30 crew members and 6 leaders but also with this season's project partners, including the U.S. Forest Service, Army Corps of Engineers, Nez Perce Tribe, Latah Soil and Water Conservation District, and the National Park Service.

For us, the highlight of this program is watching the evolution of understanding and maturity in the youth crew members as the season progresses and their connection to the natural world deepens. We first met the 2024 crew members during our marketing efforts in local high schools, followed by group-style interviews—an uncommon but highly efficient approach, especially when interviewing 76 applicants for just 30 positions. Since this was the first job for many, prior experience or qualifications weren't heavily weighted. Instead, we focused on how their personalities would contribute to the team. We didn't shy away from selecting applicants who were less polished in interviews, believing they would greatly benefit from the growth opportunities this program provides.



The growth embedded in this program cannot be overstated. Work projects within natural resources often call for early mornings, remote and rugged locations accessed by hiking with heavy packs and tools, and facing both sweltering and inclement weather. This season's scope of work included a variety of tasks: maintaining trails, fire lookouts, bridges, roadways, historic recreation sites and campsites. Crews dug line, sanded and painted, repaired and installed signs, cleared trash and debris, and performed extensive weed-eating and hand-pulling of invasive plants. Additionally, they participated in stream restoration projects, installing beaver dam analogs, planting native trees and grasses, and conducting stream health surveys.

In addition to facilitating the CBYCC, we engaged directly with the crews as sponsors of a fuels mitigation project in the Elk Ridge Subdivision, in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service, Nez Perce Tribe, and local residents. The goal of this project was to thin undergrowth and reduce ladder fuels, thereby decreasing fire danger in the area and improving overall forest health. The Kooskia and Kamiah crews worked diligently on this project during week three of the season, making a noticeable impact in a highly visible area. We hope that this completed project will inspire local residents to participate in future fuels reduction efforts.

Overall, the 2024 CBYCC season was a valuable experience for our organization. From collaborating with a diverse range of agencies to mentoring the conservationists of the future, we strengthened our connections with those who steward the lands we love and are committed to protecting. It isn't easy keeping track of 30 teenagers in the woods, but it is certainly rewarding.

Learn more about the CBYCC: [cbycc.clearwater-eda.org](http://cbycc.clearwater-eda.org)







## Community-Driven Wildfire Protection: Chipping Events Make a Difference

We are thrilled to announce the success of our chipping event reimbursement program, made possible by generous grant funding from the Idaho Department of Lands, State Farm, and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). This program has been a valuable resource for communities across the state, offering a financial incentive to enhance wildfire preparedness by reducing hazardous fuels around homes and neighborhoods.

This initiative invited applications from anyone in Idaho interested in hosting a chipping event, providing participants with up to \$2,000 in reimbursements for renting a chipper or contracting professional chipping services. The response was tremendous, and our funding was fully committed to the first ten groups who submitted their applications with more groups eagerly waiting for future funding to become available.

At this time of this article, five chipping events have been completed, with another five scheduled to take place soon. These events not only contributed to making the participating communities safer but also fostered a greater awareness of wildfire risk reduction. The positive feedback from these communities highlights the impact of programs like this in building fire adapted neighborhoods.

We are grateful to the Idaho Department of Lands, State Farm and the NFPA for making this program possible and to all the communities that participated. Stay tuned for more updates as the remaining events unfold, and we look forward to continuing our mission of empowering Idahoans to take proactive steps toward wildfire resilience.

## MITIGATION STORIES WANTED!

**We want to hear from you! Whether you've been working on wildfire preparedness at an individual level, within your community, or through local and state initiatives, we'd love to share your efforts. Tell us about the actions you've taken, the challenges you've faced, and the successes you've achieved in creating a more fire-adapted environment. Your stories can inspire others and help build a stronger, more resilient network across Idaho.**

**Send us your story today and let's celebrate the impact you're making!**

**Idaho Firewise  
P.O. Box 8234  
Moscow, ID 83843**

**Email: [shelby@idahofirewise.org](mailto:shelby@idahofirewise.org)**



## Growing Firewise: Lessons from a Horticulture Intern

My name is Camille Eells. I am a student at the College of Western Idaho's Horticulture Program. I had a wonderful experience interning as Garden Assistant at the Idaho Firewise Garden, Boise location, this summer. I was drawn to this position for two reasons; firstly, I believe that firewise landscaping is important in our dry climate, here in the Treasure Valley. Secondly, being the diversity and beauty, I found in the firewise garden during our many horticulture class visits. I absolutely love the fact that you can have a property full of a variety of plant species that support an equally varied amount of wildlife species. I wanted to begin learning how to create and maintain this kind of oasis for humans and wildlife alike, and how to apply this knowledge in future projects I take on.



While working this season, I learned a lot about managing a public display garden and all that goes into keeping it looking its best. I also got to see just how impactful this style of landscaping is. I listened to visitors of all ages and backgrounds marvel at the flowers, pollinators, birds, and beloved lizards as they passed through. The lizards were my favorite inhabitants of the garden as they brought a smile to my face, whether they were basking in the sun or frolicking through the greenery. Andrea Dorman, the Southwest Idaho Program Manager and my mentor, taught me much about firewise recommended plant species and how to best nurture them. She explained what to plant where, how much water they each need, when each flower blooms, and how to prune them to keep them looking fabulous. Through this experience I gained several new favorite plants, Chilopsis and Baptisia are two of these! I hope to be able to incorporate them into future designs.



I have already found myself recommending firewise landscaping and sharing online resources to several friends whose properties were affected by this year's wildfires. This drives home the importance of responsible landscape choices and the role that Idaho Firewise plays. I love that I can confidently share what I have learned to better my own community. My time with this organization and Andrea will remain a valuable experience for the rest of my career.

## VISIT A FIREWISE DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

College of Western Idaho - Idaho Botanical Gardens: 2355 Old Penitentiary Rd. Boise, ID 83712

Jim Hall Foothills Learning Center: 3188 Sunset Peak Rd. Boise, ID 83702

Eagle Sports Complex: Old Horseshoe Bend Rd. Garden City, ID 83714

Orton Botanical Garden: 867 Filer Ave W. Twin Falls, ID 83301



# MAY

## Wildfire Awareness Month

- Firewise Garden Open House
- Valley County Preparedness and Mitigation Activities
- Orofino Wildfire Safety Visits with the American Red Cross
- New Leaf Nursery Community Class and Open House
- Warm Springs Mesa Community Clean-up with Team Rubicon
- Barber Station Townhomes Community Clean-up
- Meat n' Greet with Happy Hog Meatery



# JUNE

- Launched Community Ambassador Partnership
- Alpha Days at Alpha Nursery & Garden Center
- Moscow Rural Fire District Open House
- CBYCC Training and Start of Season
- AAA Fire Season 101 Presentation
- Cave Bay Community HOA Presentation
- Fuels Reduction Project in Elk Ridge Subdivision



# JULY

- Landscape Consultations
- Boise Metro Chamber Presentation and Garden Tour
- Kids Library Fire Science and Safety Presentation
- Inaugural Meeting of the Idaho County Fire Collaborative
- Community Chipping Events
- CBYCC Career Day



- CBYCC End of Season Celebration

- Gwen Fire Multi-Agency Resource Center
- Exploring Wildly: Garden Tour and Wildfire Panel
- Threadleaf Designer Forum: Fire-Resilient Landscapes
- Governor Press Event at Idaho Firewise Garden
- Completed Parcel Level Risk Assessments
- Community Chipping Events

# AUGUST







Idaho Firewise  
PO Box 8234  
Moscow, ID 83843

# SUPPORT IDAHO FIREWISE

Your investment in Idaho Firewise supports the development of educational materials for all age groups, educational and horticultural internship opportunities, professional presentations for Idaho communities and plant cultivation and maintenance of the Idaho Firewise Demonstration Garden

Send gift with this form to:  
Idaho Firewise - PO Box 8234 Moscow, ID 83843



**Recurring and one-time payment options are available on our secure website:**

<https://idahofirewise.org/donate/>

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