



# WEST BASIN

Municipal Water District

## *Firescaping Workshop*

City of Malibu  
April 23, 2024

[www.westbasin.org](http://www.westbasin.org)



# WHAT THE CITY IS DOING TO PREPARE FOR WILDFIRE

## Schedule a Free Home Wildfire Assessment

A City of Malibu Fire Safety Liaison will walk around your home and property to identify areas of potential concern and discuss recommendations for home defense.

- An assessment takes 45-60 minutes to complete.
- The homeowner or representative will receive a written evaluation within 3 to 5 business days.

### To schedule your assessment please:

1. Go to City off Malibu: [malibucity.org/952/Fire-Safety](https://malibucity.org/952/Fire-Safety)
2. Select an available date and time
3. Complete the booking details and submit the request
4. Print and sign the required [Liability Waiver](#) and present to the assessor when they arrive for your appointment.

## CONTACT US

**GABRIEL ETCHEVERRY**

**Fire Safety Liaison**

[GEtcheverry@malibucity.org](mailto:GEtcheverry@malibucity.org)

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## Instructor – Douglas Kent

Douglas Kent is an author, activist, educator, and specialist in ecological land management. He is the Principal of Douglas Kent + Associates and Adjunct Professor at the John Lyle Center for Regenerative Studies at Cal Poly Pomona



# Outline

## Firescaping: Protecting Your Home and Family

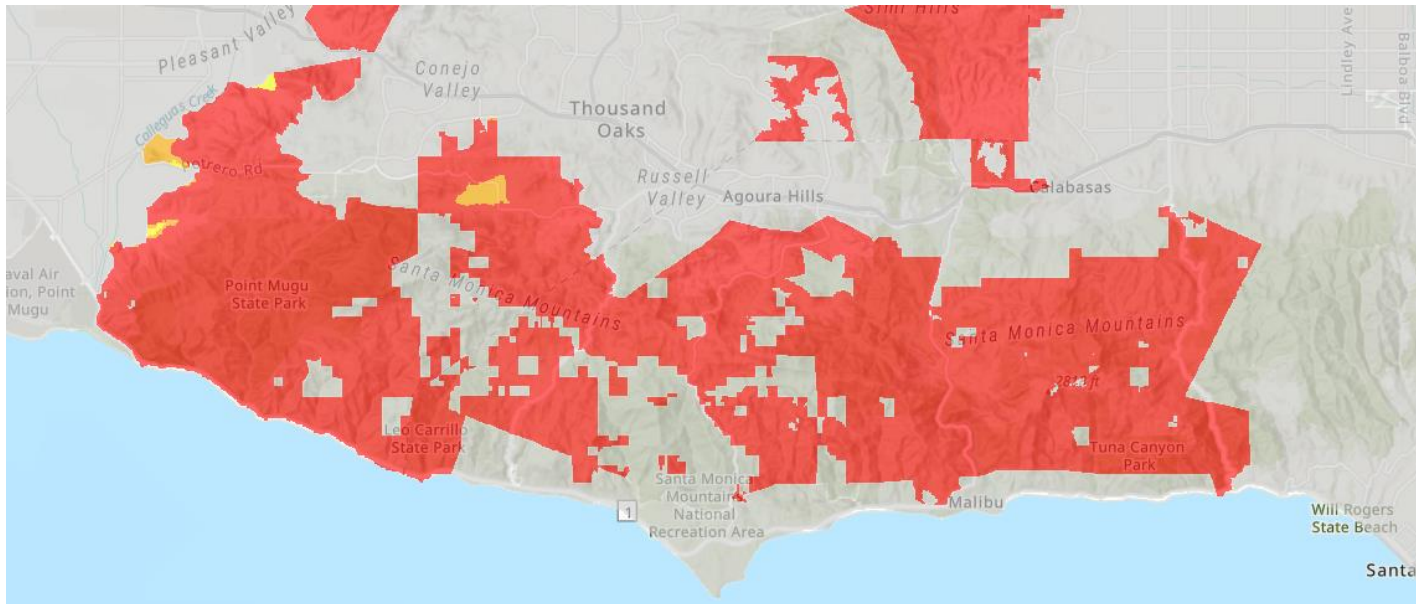
1. Structures
2. First 5 Feet
3. Defensible Space
4. Plants
5. Conclusion



# Introduction

## Fire is an Ever-Present Danger

According to CalFire and the State Fire Marshal's web site, the Malibu and Topanga are considered a High Fire Hazard Areas.





## Structures

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# Structures

## Your 1<sup>st</sup> Priority!

Whether firebrands or direct flame contact, your structure must be maintained to withstand an assault of intense heat and flying burning embers.



Bond Fire, 2020



Woolsey Fire, 2018

# Structures: Of Concern to Malibu & Topanga

## *Topics*

Fire-Hardened Structures

Ridgetop Living

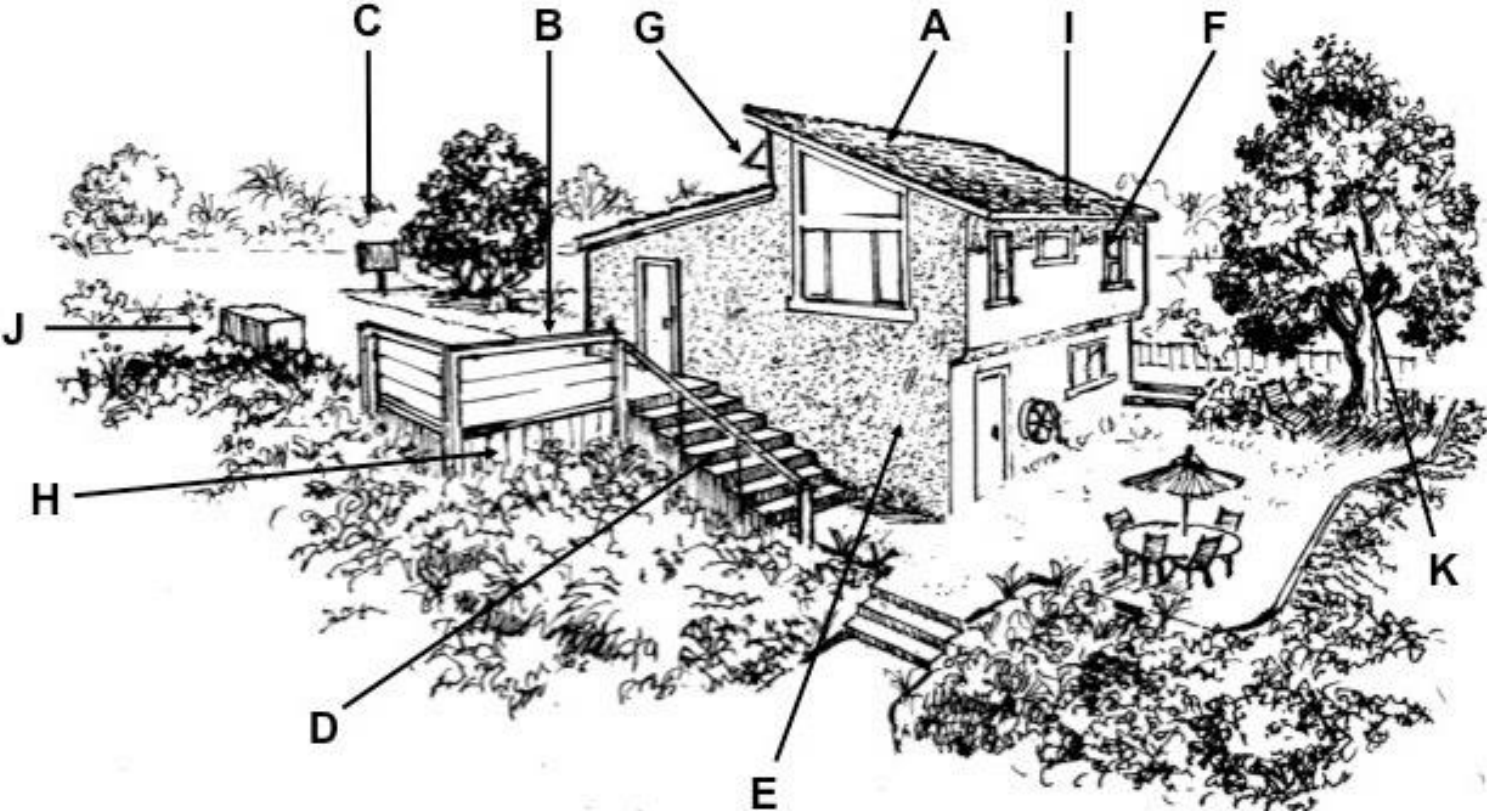
Outbuildings

Small Lots





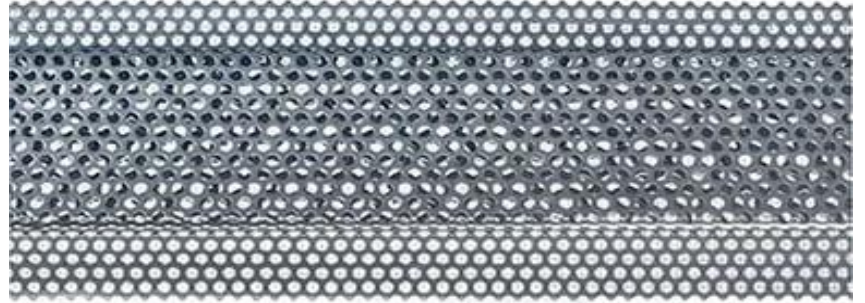
# Structures: Characteristics of a Fire-Hardened House



# Structures: Ridgetop Living

## *Problems*

- Elongated flames
- Intense heat
- Firebrands propelled by convection



Vulcan Vent: Fire and ember safe

## *Solutions*

- Screens
- Eaves
- Trim
- Siding



## Structures: Outbuildings *Needs Attention*

- Basic maintenance
- Weatherization
- Check screens



Firebrands can ignite these two outbuildings. The overflowing rain gutters (left) and the big gaps in the door (top) create opportunities and fuel for firebrands.

## Small Properties

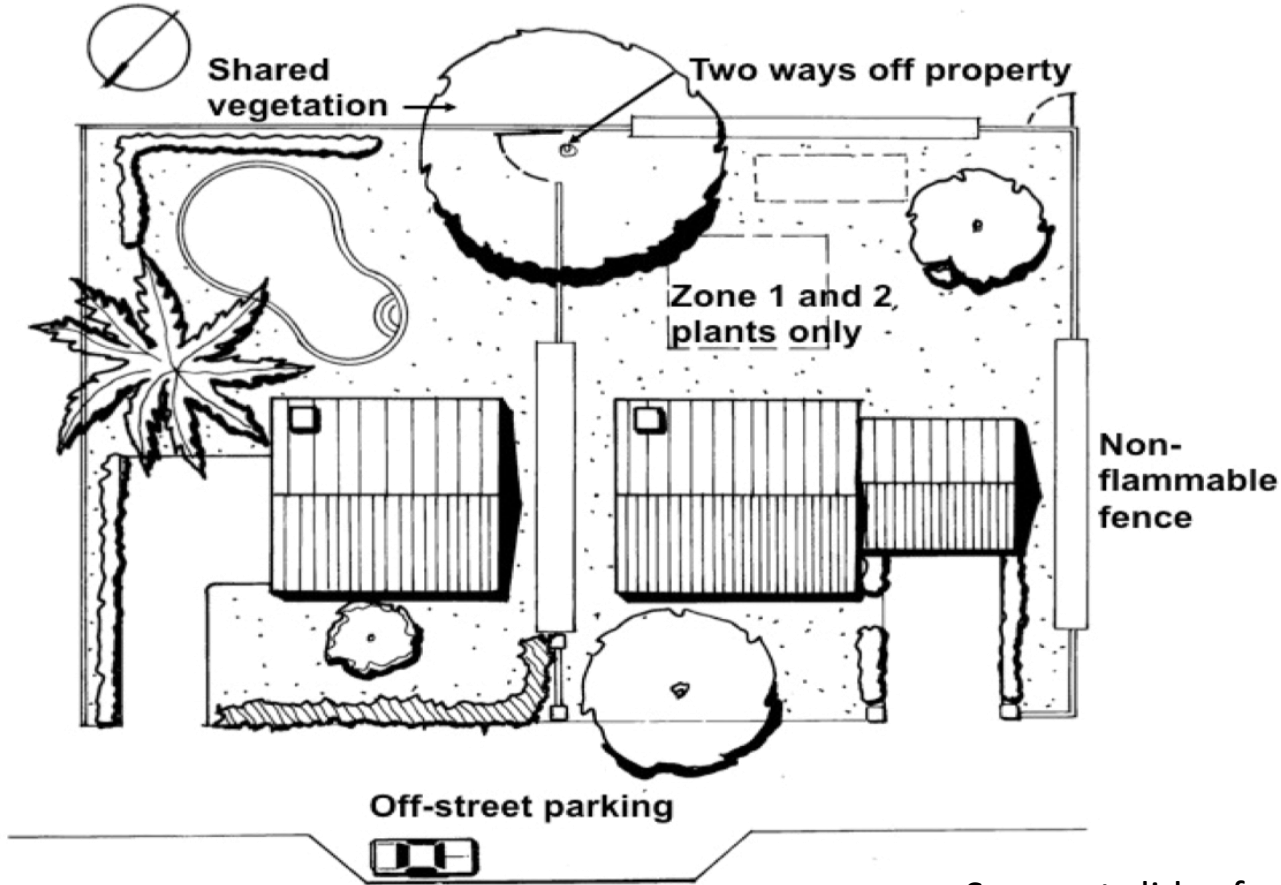
As illustrated by the state's deadliest and most destructive wildfires, small lot neighborhoods are particularly vulnerable to loss. The reason is because there is not enough distance between the homes to buffer the intense heat and a domino effect is created. Homes burn at about 1,110 degrees F.



Old Fire, 2003



# Structures: Small Lot Design Strategies



# Structures: Small Lot Design Strategies

**The Roof:** Installing and maintaining a fire-retarding roof is possibly the most important aspect to protecting a house on a small lot.



**Off-Street Parking:** Gridlock is common in high-density neighborhoods, but more so during wildfires. Off-street parking and pullouts will greatly speed travel times.

**Escape Routes:** Dense neighborhoods need as many escape routes as possible.

**Fences:** The pursuit of privacy adds an incredible amount of fuel to any property, but it is compounded on small lots. Separate structures with a concrete wall.

**Plant Selection:** Fire retardant and fire-resistant plants only on small lots.

**Shared Vegetation:** Not every property needs a tree. Oftentimes a homeowner can simply let their neighbor's tree grow over and onto their property.

**Pools and Spas:** Design your pool or spa so that you or fire fighters have easy access to the water and drain outlets.

## Structures: To Do

- Ensure all openings are screened.
- Clean **roof** and gutters.
- Manage **seams** and fill gaps.
- Paint, if not sand, all peeling **paint**.
- Make your **address** visible.





# Questions

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Structures

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## First Five Feet

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# First Five Feet: Video

## [West Basin's First 5 Feet](#)

# First Five Feet: Shade Structures

## *Problems*

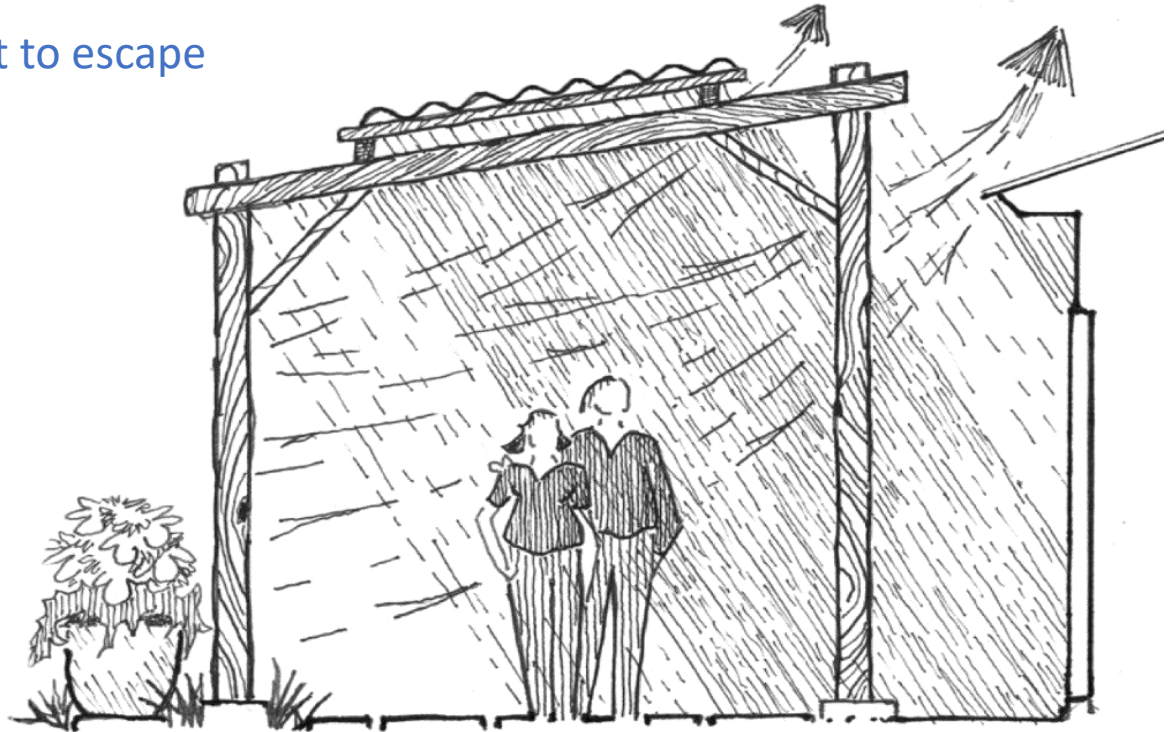
- Poorly maintained
- Attached to structures



# First Five Feet: Shade Structures

## *Solutions*

- Detach from structure
- Slant to allow heat to escape
- Care for the wood



## First Five Feet: Do you see it?



The wood, containers and tools provide opportunities for ignition and unnecessarily add risk to an otherwise fire-hardened property.



# Questions

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## First Five Feet

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## Defensible Space

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# Defensible Space: Video

## [West Basin's Defensible Space](#)



# Defensible Space: First 30 Feet

## *Additional Topics*

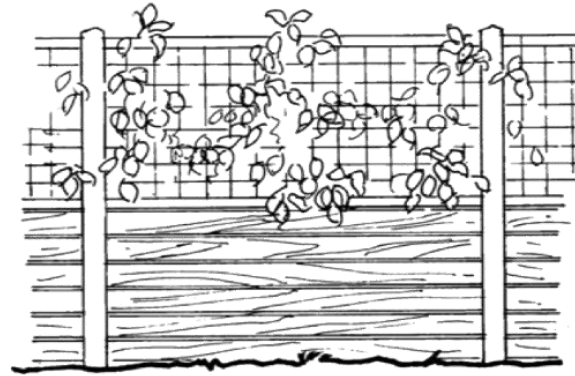
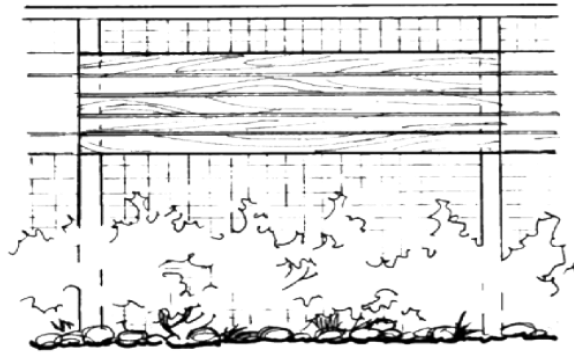
- ➔ Fencing
- ➔ Decks



# Defensible Space: Fencing



# Defensible Space: Fencing



# Defensible Space: Landscape Features

## *Needs Attention*

- Basic maintenance
- Clean and preserve wood
- Remove flammable items from around landscape feature



## Defensible Space: To Do

- Remove all flammable items within the first 5 feet!
- Remove dead, **dying** and diseased vegetation.
- Maintain landscape features, such as fences and tree houses.





# Questions

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Defensible Space

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## Plants

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## Plants: Less Flammable



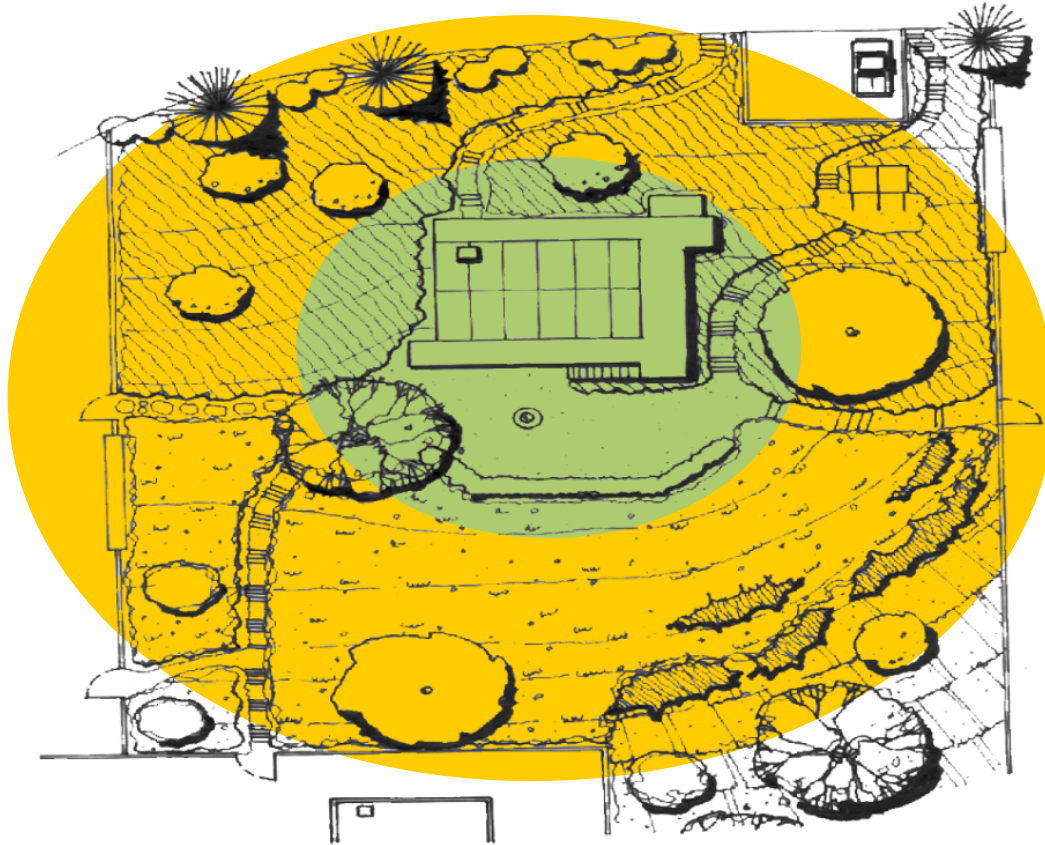
Coral bells (*Heuchera*) and *Carex pansa* have many ideal attributes.

### *Knowing Traits is More Important than Lists*

- Broadleaf plants
- Moist and easily bent leaves
- Thick leaves
- Low amount of litter
- Sap that looks more like water
- Plants without fragrance
- Plants with silver or gray leaves
- Plant leaves without hair



# Plants: Less Flammable



**FIRE  
RESISTANT**



**FIRE  
RETARDANT**

# Plants: Less Flammable



## Fire Retardant

- Agapanthus
- Cercis – Redbud
- Crape Myrtle
- Fescue
- Flax
- Gazania
- Grape
- Liquidambar
- Philodendron
- Photinia
- Succulents



## Fire Resistant

- Artemisia ‘Silver King’
- Ceanothus
- Cistus – Rockrose
- Coast Live Oak
- Cotoneaster
- Lemonade Berry
- Mallow
- Native Verbena
- Toyon
- Yarrow
- Yucca

# Plants: Less Flammable - Lists



Citrus is notoriously good at resisting the effects of fire and intense heat.

## Fire Resistant

- **Bird**
- **Food**
- **Lawn Alternatives**
- **Medicine**
- **Native**
  - Chaparral
  - Desert
  - Woodland Understory
- **Succulents**
- **Temperate**
- **Tropical**

## Plants: The Problem with Lists



- Too Old
- Diseased
- Injured
- Pest Infested
- Not Healthy

***Maintenance is the Fulcrum of Fire Safety***

## Plants: To Do

- ➔ Remove dead, **dying** and diseased vegetation.
- ➔ **Replace** vegetation before it becomes an economic liability and fire risk.
- ➔ Do not let your plants **dry** out.





# Questions

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Plants

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# Resources for Malibu and Topanga

## State Approved Air Vents for Fire Protection

- Brandguard Vents, San Clemente, CA  
<https://www.brandguardvents.com/>
- Embers Out LLC, Yorba Linda, CA  
<https://www.embersout.com/>
- Vulcan Technologies, San Rafael, CA  
<http://www.vulcantechnologies.com/>

## Flame Retardant Paints

All the companies below provide Class A paints, the most fire retarding and state approved.

- BanFire
- FireTech
- FlameOFF
- INSL-X
- Krylon
- Master Flame
- Zero Flame

## Nursery Centers with Experience in Fire Protection

- Trancas Canyon Nursery, Malibu
- Cosentino's Nursery, Malibu

## Qualified Landscape Contractors

California Landscape Contractors Association, "Find a Contractor"

<https://member-clca.org/max/4DCGI/directory/contractor/index.html>



# Contacts

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## **County of Los Angeles –**

## **Fire Department**

[www.fire.lacounty.gov](http://www.fire.lacounty.gov)

## **Los Angeles County**

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# Final Questions

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