



**FEBRUARY
2024
Newsletter**

Meeting Notes
From January 11, 2024

- Renovations are largely complete in Ruth Mill Park. The memorial bench and bike rack will be installed soon.
- Condolences to Club Secretary Linda Yowell, whose husband, Rick, passed away in December, 2023. The club gave Linda a Norfolk Pine in memory of Rick. Our thoughts are with you, Linda!
- The Plant Giveaway and Bake Sale at Project Support Sr. Center has been moved to Saturday, May 11th.
- Karen Kalabany joined the Club.

2024 CGC MEETING SCHEDULE
Second Thursday of the month at noon at the Elks Lodge in Idaho Springs
Thursday, February 8
Flower Arranging
Bring cash donations for the Senior Center Love Offering
Please RSVP by Sunday, February 4 by calling Linda at 303-898-8017 or via email – rickyowell7682@msn.com
Thursday, March 14
Air Plants by Nancy Spletzer
Thursday, April 11
Thursday, May 9

*Mill Creek Valley Historical Society
Mardi Gras Party*

Saturday February 10, 5:00 - 9:30 PM
\$20.00 per person, cash only at the door

The Mill Creek Valley Historical Society is celebrating Mardi Gras at the old school, 150 Dumont Lane, in Dumont. Delicious, homemade southern food and a cash bar serving wine, Louisiana Beer and Hurricanes. Drawings and best costume prizes. Benefit for MCVHS, visit www.mcvhs.org for more information.

CGC PLANT SALE

Thursday to Saturday
June 6-8, 2024

Hanging baskets, color bowls, herbs, tomatoes, peppers, perennials and more!

To stay up to date with club activities,
go to www.columbinegardenclub.com

Garden Design Techniques for Areas Prone to Wildfire

EXCERPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY ED BROTA, AUG 30, 2022

As a homeowner, there are things you can do to protect your house and property from wildfires. There are certainly steps you should take with your house, especially in terms of building materials, to make it more fire resistant. In this article, I'll cover what you can do with your yard and areas surrounding your house to protect it from wildfires. What kind of plants should you have and which you should avoid? Where can you have plants and where should you not have them?

The Defensible Space

In fire-prone lands, you want to create around your house a "defensible space," defensible meaning that firefighters can safely occupy this space to protect your home. Even if firefighters can't respond (often the case in large fires), a defensible space will increase the odds of your home avoiding damage or destruction. The actual size of defensible space you need depends on the height and density of surrounding vegetation and the steepness of any slope your home sits on. The denser and/or higher the vegetation and the steeper the slope, the larger the defensible space required. (Fires burn faster uphill.)

You should start in the area immediately around your house. You could just have a ground cover. A well-watered and maintained lawn would work, but it requires considerable maintenance—you can't let it get too high—and it is not natural. Near the house, crushed rock, flowerbeds or non-flammable mulch is preferred. Keep plants away from windows (which can break with extreme heat) and combustible siding. Any dead leaves, pine needles or other flammable debris should be regularly removed from the roof, gutters and any spot within five feet of the house.

For vegetation, there are three R's of defensible space: removal, reduction, replacement.

Remove vegetation as much as possible and **reduce the size** of the plants you have. Low growing are best. They are less likely to be ignited and if they are, there's less fuel and a much smaller flame. Avoid bushy, tall plants, which could produce a large flame. A more open plant with loose branching, like a rose bush, is better.

Replace flammable vegetation with less flammable plants. There is no such thing as a fully fireproof plant, but there are plants that are more fire resistant. These are plants with a high leaf moisture content and a low sap or resin content. Don't use junipers. In an experiment, a one-foot-tall juniper bush produced a ten-foot-high flame when ignited. Keep in mind that all plants must be properly maintained—regularly watered and trimmed of any dead material. To help select the best plants for your location, consult your local nursery, landscape contractor or cooperative extension service.

Further away from your house—out several hundred feet—you still need to take precautions, especially if your yard is merging into the natural landscape. Patios, walkways and driveways can act as firebreaks. So can stonework, crushed stone and gardens.

Keep firewood piles away from the house. If you have an outdoor propane tank, make sure no vegetation is near it.

Notes on Trees

Trees are a major concern. When the leaves of the top of a tree catch fire (called crowning), it creates a massive torch with flames extending well above and away from the tree itself. You don't want anything like this near your house. In terms of types of trees, avoid conifers. Their natural resins are highly flammable, even when the needles are green. Seed cones can become fire bombs. Fallen needles can act as tinder for a fire, especially dangerous if they accumulate on roofs or near your home. Deciduous hardwoods are much preferred, with their high-moisture-content leaves. When the leaves die and fall in the Autumn, they should be quickly removed.

To avoid crown fires where coniferous trees exist, you should remove ladder fuels—that is, vegetation under the tree. Prune taller trees so that no branches sit below 6 to 10 feet. If possible, keep trees apart, at least 18 feet between tree crowns, but even farther on steep slopes.

Closer to your home, trim any branches that hang over or near your house. The general rule is that any branch within six feet of your house should be removed. Also beware of tree branches that may hit a power line in strong winds, causing a fire. Trim trees as needed to prevent this. Any standing dead trees should be taken down. Fallen ones should be removed. Small trees, especially volatile conifers, should be removed. If possible, try to have gaps in the forest canopy, areas where tree crowns are some distance apart.

Will all this guarantee that your home will be safe from wildfires?

No.

Extreme wildfire situations can be indefensible.
But you will certainly improve the odds that your home will be spared.