

FIRE-SAFE LANDSCAPING

Fire safety during veld fires.

The Western Cape is South Africa's most vulnerable region with respect to veldfires. There are a number of steps you can take to prevent the loss of life and property during major veld fires.

Fire-safe Landscaping

Fire-safe landscaping is an effective tool that creates an area of defensible space between your home and flammable vegetation, protecting you against devastating fires.

The Fire Brigade Services (FBS) encourages you to learn how to landscape your property, in order to minimise the effects of fire damage.

Defensible Space Works

In a fire situation, the dead trees and shrubs surrounding your home act as fuel for fire. Removing flammable vegetation through landscaping techniques reduces the threat.

Tips for a Fire-safe Landscape

- Create a defensible space perimeter by thinning trees and brush within 10 metres around your home.
- Beyond 10 metres, remove dead wood, debris and low tree branches.
- Eliminate small trees and plants growing under trees as they allow ground fires to 'jump' into tree crowns.
- Space trees 10 metres apart and prune to a height of 3 metres.
- Place shrubs at least 10 metres from any structures and prune regularly.
- Plant the most drought-tolerant vegetation within 1 metre of your home and adjacent to structures to prevent ignition.
- Provide at least a 2 to 3 metre separation between islands of shrubs and plant groups to effectively breakup continuity of vegetation.

Choose Fire Resistant Materials

- Check your local nursery or fire protection association for advice on fire-resistant plants that are suited for your environment.
- Create fire-safe zones using stonewalls, patios, swimming pools, decks and roadways.
- Rock, mulch, flowerbeds and gardens can be used as ground cover for bare spaces or used as effective firebreaks.
- Select high moisture plants that grow close to the ground and have low sap or resin content.

- Choose plant species that resist ignition such as Aloes and Vygies (Sour Figs).
- Also make use of fire-resistant shrubs such as Camphor bush and groundcover vegetation such as Cliffortia, Gazania and Helichrysum.
- Plant forest trees that have a natural resistance to fire and do not burn easily. For example: Cape Beech, Wild Almond and Rooiels which are less flammable than Pine and other Conifers.

Maintain Your Home and Surrounding Property

- Maintain a well-pruned and watered landscape to serve as a green belt and protection against fire.
- Keep plants green during the dry season and use supplementary irrigation if necessary.
- Trim grass on a regular basis up to 30 metres surrounding your home.
- Stack firewood at least 10 metres from your home.
- Store flammable materials, liquids and solvents in metal containers outside your home, at least 10 metres away from all structures and wooden fences.
- No matter where you live, always install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.

Remember to prepare your property to be lean, clean and green. Fire stops with you!

For more information contact your local fire department or fire protection association.

Wildfire emergency services:

- In Cape Town call: 107 from your landline, or 021 4807700 from your cell phone.
- In the Cape Winelands District call: 021 8874446.
- In the West Coast District call: 022 4338700.
- In the Overberg District call: 028 4251690.
- In the Eden District call: 044 8055071.
- In the Central Karoo District call: 023 4142603.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

From your landline:

10177

From your cellphone:

112