

SECOND AMENDED FIREWISE LANDSCAPE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to create defensible space around the homes and other structures in Oakmont Village Association and reduce the threat of wildland fire to lives and property.

Background:

Much of Oakmont Village Association is located in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). California Government Code 51182 and the Public Resources Code 4291 require that homeowners clear out flammable materials such as dead or dying brush or vegetation around buildings to the property line to create a defensible space buffer.

The Santa Rosa Fire Department also requires proper vegetation management around the home, most commonly referred to as defensible space, or the space between a structure and the wildland area that creates a buffer to slow or halt the spread of fire to a structure. Ember fires can destroy home far from the front of a fire.

The policy's intent is to empower residents with the information and knowledge they need to survive a wildland fire.

1. Defensible space is the buffer between a building on your property and the grass, trees, shrubs, or any wildland area that surrounds it. This essential space is needed to slow or stop the spread of wildfire, and it helps protect homes from catching fire, either from direct flame contact, embers or radiant heat. Defensible space is also important for the protection of the firefighters defending a home or building.
2. Fire-wise landscaping is a combination of plant material (such as fire-wise trees, shrubs, flowers, lawn, ground cover plants) boulders, gravel, rock and composted mulch. Sustainable fire-wise landscape should be easy to care for and maintained at all times to assure an aesthetically pleasing, attractive appearance. Trees, shrubs and all plant materials must be pruned to remove any dead material for fire safety and appearance.
3. All dying or dead trees and shrubs must be removed and can be replaced with new plants with prior AC approval. No trees, shrubs, or any plant material listed on OVA's Do Not Plant List (attached) are allowed within the 5-foot defensible space next to the home. No plant material on the OVA Do Not Plant List shall be allowed in new landscaping on the remainder of the property.
4. Lawns must be mowed, kept weed free and watered sufficiently to maintain a healthy and green appearance. Wildland grasses must be cut or mowed down mechanically or with sheep to a maximum height of 4 inches annually.

5. Trees:
 - (a) Established trees shall be limbed to a minimum of at least 6 feet from the ground but not to exceed 1/3 of the tree height.
 - (b) Limbs within 10 feet of a chimney shall be removed. Keep trees trimmed at least 10 feet from your chimney and away from your roof. Remove all dead and dying branches overhanging the roof. Healthy overhanging limbs shall be trimmed to a minimum of six-feet from the roof or any structures.
 - (c) Areas under tree canopies shall be maintained free of weeds and dry plant material. Shrubs should be pruned so they do not create ladder fuel on the property.
 - (d) Dead branches shall be removed.
 - (e) No new trees shall be planted within 10 feet of the house or within 10 feet of canopies of other trees on the property.
6. In creating a 5-foot defensible space next to the house, the use of combustible mulch is not allowed. Noncombustible rock, gravel, concrete and pavers are allowed. Rock used as mulch between plants is exempt from the 15% rock rule calculation. Front yard plantings and side-yard street frontage plantings shall be mulched with rock, gravel, or allowed wood mulches. Finely shredded redwood or cedar bark, such as Gorilla hair, or rubber mulches are not allowed on the property. The amount of wood mulch allowed in large areas without live plants depends on the size of the lot. A study entitled Combustibility of Landscape Mulches can be obtained from the AC office. Plans must specify what rock, wood mulch, gravel, etc., color and size, is desired. A sample of mulch material must be submitted with application and must be approved by the AC.
7. New plantings of fire-wise shrubs, perennials, ground covers and flowers allowed in the 5-foot defensible space shall be maintained at 18" high or less, and irrigated.
8. New landscaping choices must be made with consideration of the plant's mature height and spread.
9. All new installations such as gates, protective patio golf screens, sheds, or a portion of fence that attaches directly to a home, and out a distance of five feet from the home or structure, must be made of metal or approved non-flammable material.
10. Chimney spark arrestors that are code compliant are required on all wood-burning fireplaces.
11. Keep gutters clean of debris.

12. All firewood must be stored at least 30 feet away from the home, garage or attached deck or other structures.

Exceptions to the above paragraphs #5, 6 may be granted as the AC may deem appropriate.

Landscaping plans for front, side and back yards must be submitted to the Architectural Committee (AC) using the AC Application, which can be obtained from the AC office or found under Architectural on the OVA website. All landscaping projects require prior written approval by the AC before any work may begin.

Owners must comply with the following guidelines (1 through 7 below) by August 31, 2021:

- 1) Property owners shall remove plants on the OVA Do Not Plant List from within 5-foot defensible space zone. Any existing trees and shrubs not on the OVA Flammable/Do Not Plant List may remain in the 5-foot defensible space. Those shrubs should be healthy and maintained free of dead wood.
- 2) Property owners shall remove all wood and rubber mulches within the 5-foot defensible space zone.
- 3) Property owners shall remove dead branches from shrubs and trees, keeping the integrity of the tree; all dead trees and shrubs shall be removed.
- 4) Property owners shall remove all finely shredded redwood or cedar bark, such as gorilla-hair and rubber mulch from the entire property.
- 5) Property owners shall remove all leaves and needles from structures' roof and rain gutters as needed to avoid accumulation.
- 6) All wildland grasses must be cut or mowed down mechanically or by sheep annually to a maximum height of 4 inches.
- 7) All firewood and any combustible materials must be stored at least 30 feet away from the home, garage or attached deck or other structures.

*Property owners are encouraged to employ fuel load reduction and vegetation management strategies in CalFire Zone 1, zero to 30 feet or to the property line.

Owners must comply with the following guidelines by August 31, 2022:

1. Trees:

- a. Areas under tree canopies shall be maintained free of weeds and dry plant material. Shrubs should be pruned so that they do not create ladder fuel on the property.
- b. Remove all dead and dying branches overhanging the roof. Healthy overhanging limbs shall be trimmed to a minimum of six-feet from the roof or any structures. All ladder fuel in Cal Fire Zone 1, zero to 30 feet, or to the property line (whichever is applicable), shall be removed.
- c. Remove tree limbs that extend into the 5-foot ignition zone around the home.

Exceptions to tree guidelines may be granted as deemed appropriate by inspectors

2. Junipers: Property owners shall remove all junipers (*Juniperus* spp.) from the entire property.

This policy shall be amended and updated by the Fire-wise Safety Committee to meet defensible space guidelines under California Code 51182 and Public Resources Code 4291 and other fire-wise polices as deemed appropriate for Oakmont.

First Amended Policy Adopted 11/17/2020
Second Amended Policy Adopted 2/16/2021