



## THE KEY TO A SAFER TOMORROW

# FIREWISE BULLETIN

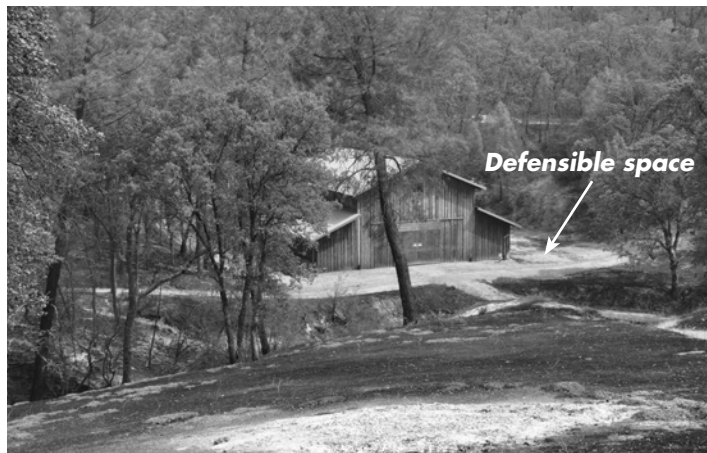
FALL 2015

## DEFENDING DEFENSIBLE SPACE!

Does defensible space really work? The simple answer is – absolutely. The recent Rocky Fire has many examples of structures surviving a raging fire sweeping through without any damage, not even blistered paint. There are picture after picture of complete devastation, a virtual moon scape, with a structure sitting untouched in the

ignite due to embers simmering on ignitable materials. Beyond the obvious things such as non-flammable roofing and decking materials, exterior nooks and crannies where embers can collect should be addressed. Ancillary wood structures (fancy terms for sheds) should be safe distances from main structures, especially if old, dry wood is

exposed. Wood piles should be located far away from structures and trees, especially not under decks. Canvas awnings may provide shade from the sun, but they also can ignite.



Access is also very important. If a delivery truck can't easily navigate your access road, how do you expect a fire truck to? Trees should be limbed up with at least fourteen feet clearance above the road. Roadside brush and weeds should be cleared

back a safe distance. The road needs to be passable for emergency vehicles and your own escape if necessary.

If you are unsure about defensible space, fire hardening a structure, access, or whatever fire related, there are many resources to turn to. The NCFE website has many excellent references, both downloadable papers and other resource sites. CALFIRE has an inspection program where staff will visit and make suggestions to be firewise. Need further help, just ask at [info@napafirewise.org](mailto:info@napafirewise.org) and we'll do our best to assist or point you in the right direction.

Is defensible space all one needs to be so fortunate to survive a fire's devastation, unfortunately no. Structures also need to be fire hardened. In addition to clearing all flammable vegetation away from the structure, care must be taken to make sure there are no areas where embers can accumulate and ignite. Many structures survive a fire blasting by to only later

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# THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER.....

## A Message from Stephen Gort

Another fiscal year ended June 30th, and happily it was yet another successful year for Napa Firewise, thanks largely to the wonderful volunteers who manage the Fire Safe Councils of our eight communities. We are already in contract negotiations for yet another year of support from Napa County and the Napa County Fire Department. As always, we give our gratitude for their continued support which keeps our program afloat.

This year our communities managed to obtain significant fuel mitigation grants from PG&E, including Mt. Veeder and Berryessa Estates. We also saw the first community grants from the California SRA Program with awards to Soda Canyon and Mt. Veeder.

(Yes, the Mt Veeder Firesafe Council has had quite a year!).

We welcomed the community of Angwin into the Napa Firewise

Program with their kick-off educational seminar "Home Ignition Zone Workshop" in August. While there are several other, smaller areas to reach, the inclusion of Angwin marks the enabling and engaging of the last large community in the County.

The Firewise Board is working on several new projects the most notable of which is the use of county-wide fire simulation software, to assist in highlighting critical areas in need of our mitigation attention and development of a county-wide CWPP – rolling up all of the hard work done by our communities into one master planning effort for the County.

I want to thank all of the people who work in our community councils as well as the members of the Firewise board for their hard work to protect the lives and property of our county. Thank you, and wishing you continued success in your tireless efforts!

## GOT SENSE?

Being 'Firewise' involves some knowledge of safe practices, but mainly it involves common sense. The vast majority of fires are caused by people and almost all of these fires involve people doing things without using common sense. Things which may seem obvious as a fire risk, people are often oblivious to, undertaking activities or practices without thinking. The following are some examples of things to think about first before sparks fly:

Don't mow or use garden tools which can spark off rocks when it is hot and dry. Do these activities on a cool, hopefully damp, morning before 10am. Have water hose or other means of fire suppression handy in case the unthinkable happens. Put weed whacker metal blades away for the summer and strictly go string.

Don't drive or park vehicles in tall weeds that can ignite from hot exhaust systems.

If pulling a trailer, make sure safety chains don't drag on the pavement causing sparks.

Lawn mowers are designed to mow lawn - not dry vegetation. Take care to remove



### *Good intentions, bad outcome*

rocks or anything that can spark from area to be mowed prior to mowing.

Go gas for outdoor cooking. If you simply can't help yourself and are compelled to use charcoal or wood – be very careful to not let flying embers, post cooking coals or overflowing ash catchers cause a fire. Q'ers are responsible for far too many fires.

If 'burning off' a grill to clean it, make sure you don't burn it and your house up the process.

Have fire extinguisher handy in both indoor kitchen and outdoor cooking areas.

If using gas powered equipment, don't let dry grass contact hot exhaust when using tools or laying them aside.

Always have cell phone handy to call 911 in an emergency.

The list\* goes on and on, but hopefully these few points paint enough of a picture for you to start thinking on how to be uncommon and use common sense! Please think before you act and be firewise.

\*Please refer to NCCFF website publications section, *One Less Spark'*

**We need your support**

# MASTER GARDENER'S FALL GARDEN TOUR by Carol Rice

Napa Firewise will collaborate with UC Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden at Connolly Ranch during their sixth annual fall garden tour September 13, from 9:00 - 3:00 PM.

The entire garden area at Connolly Ranch made use of hardscape between well-tended areas of plants. The garden demonstrates how to space plants so they are firewise. Plant choices are also firewise: large leaves, small biomass, lack of dead material in the plant, as well as lack of oily leaves. For more information on plant choices, see the Napa Firewise plant list as it appears in the Living with Wildfire publication, available at [www.napafirewise.org/living\\_w\\_fire\\_brochure\\_.pdf](http://www.napafirewise.org/living_w_fire_brochure_.pdf).

This is part of a self-guided educational tour of seven gardens of Master Gardeners in and around the City of Napa. These gardens illustrate how Napa County Master Gardeners use University of California research-based horticultural information to develop and maintain their own gardens.

The tour includes both large and small gardens where you will see examples of beautiful and creative low-water

use landscapes, home garden food production, plantings for wildlife and welcoming outdoor living areas. The gardens incorporate various designs for water conservation including an innovative rain water capturing system. All gardens use plantings appropriate for our Mediterranean climate and are unique in design and function. There will be Master Gardener docents and educational information at each location.

Tickets: \$30 Advance / \$35 Day of Event. Tickets may be purchased online

in advance by credit card at <http://ucanr.edu/ucmgnapa> through Friday, September 11, 2015. Napa. Will-call and day of event ticket sales will be available from 8:45 am - 2:00 pm at 1710 Soscol Ave, Suite 4, Napa.

For more information about the tour and tickets, visit <http://ucanr.edu/ucmgnapa> or call 707-253-4143. Find us on Facebook under UC Master Gardeners of Napa County for updates from the gardens and photos.



## ROGUE PILES

Every year brush piles appear road side for NCCFF's free chipping program as residents create and maintain their defensible space. This is nothing short of awesome. Unfortunately, many only get part of the picture – create piles for chipping without requesting a chipper visit. The unreported piles are termed 'rogue piles' and have historically been chipped as time allowed. It is really imperative that chipping requests be submitted – either online or by phone. Important facets of the chipping program are tracking pile size and, more importantly, labor hours expended to create the pile. NCCFF is a non-profit organization and relies on grants to fund mitigation projects. Grant proposals generally require matching funds from the requesting organization. Labor hours for mitigation activities, meaning resident's time spent creating

those brush piles, are considered service in kind and applied as matching funds. NCCFF ability to maintain the chipping program and mitigation project relies on piles being properly reported in chipping requests.

It is also important to remember what can be chipped. Please do not toss construction lumber, metal objects or stringy vines like **poison oak** which can foul the chipper into brush piles for chipping. Damaging the chipper takes it out of service and is expensive to repair.

Please don't go 'rogue', request chipping once you have brush piles ready.

Donations to NCCFF are tax deductible

# Meet the Board

NCCF is pleased to reintroduce board members with their reshuffled responsibilities:

## President and Foundation Development

Stephen Gort

## Vice President Community Development

Tim Streblov

## Secretary & Treasurer

Rick Thornberry

## Director of Communications

Tom Vreeland

## Director & President Emeritus

Darren Drake

## Director & Secretary Emeritus

Alicia Amaro

## Director & Insurance Industry Adviser

Brooke Dunton



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## IT'S NOT OVER YET!

It is the end of August and we are only halfway through a fire season with extreme conditions. The ongoing drought coupled with sporadic rains and an unusually warm winter have produced dense grasses and brush that are at extremely low moisture levels. We have unprecedented conditions of dry fuel loads which spells danger in capital letters until rains arrive. We have already experienced an onslaught of horrific fires throughout the western states and conditions are only going to worsen.

Are you prepared if the unthinkable happens and fire strikes your neighborhood? Beyond defensible space and fire hardening your home, are you prepared to evacuate on a moment's notice? Unfortunately the reality we live with is the risk of being told to leave your home in mere minutes or put your life in jeopardy. This harrowing time is not the point that you want to start thinking about what you can throw in your car if a few minutes. One needs a written evacuation plan for such an emergency. Beyond those cherished items you can't think of parting with such as photo albums, one needs to remember things like medicines, cell phone and charger, pet supplies and of course the pet(s), important papers, computer back up and the list goes on. One should have a box with some things ready to go along with a list. Please refer to 'Ready, Set, Go' and 'What If...' posted in NCCF publications section for recommendations on things to consider regarding evacuation. Be prepared and let's all hope you never need to use the 'ready box'.

## In the chips?

If not, use the Firewise chipping program, it's free!

- Chipping requests online [www.napafirewise.org](http://www.napafirewise.org) or call 707-967-1426.
- Chipping season is March - September!

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Contact us: [info@napafirewise.org](mailto:info@napafirewise.org)

Bulletin Editor: Tom Vreeland

# Napa Communities Firewise Foundation

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