

MAKING YOUR PROPERTY FIRE-SAFE



UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
**Agriculture &
Natural Resources**



UC Cooperative Extension
Los Angeles County

Fire Preparedness for You and Your Property

- Pull weeds or weed whip before seed heads mature, to reduce fire hazard and the spread of invasive plants. Plants may go to seed any time between February and April, depending on the previous year's weather
- Call your local utility company for a yearly inspection if utility lines conflict with any trees on your property. Also confirm the maximum allowable tree height near power lines before pruning or planting trees
- Locate woodpiles and fuel tanks at least thirty feet from all structures and maintain a 10 foot zone free of vegetation around them
- Make sure your decks, porches, or landings are free of unnecessary clutter and that

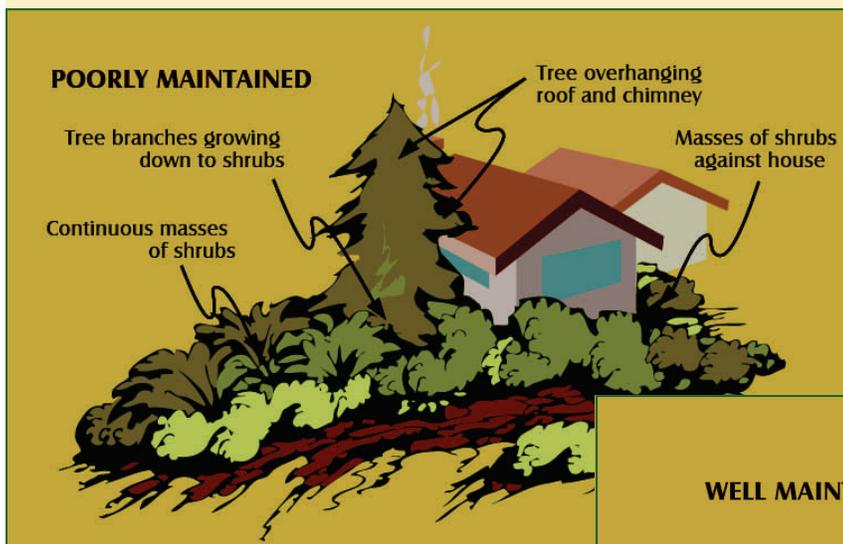
them, along with a hammer and nails or drill screws, in an easily accessible place

- Be sure to keep your "water reservoirs" and portable tanks filled, and have mops and hoses stored with the rest of your emergency supplies (ladders, shovels, etc.)

Brush Clearance Inspections

Brush clearance, weed abatement, and fuel modification are all terms used by fire jurisdictions to describe required treatment or thinning of vegetation on your property to reduce fire hazards. **They DON'T mean the clearance of all vegetation, but selective removal to decrease fire risk.** You are only required to treat the vegetation on your own property. Brush clearance on other property is the responsibility of the owner.

Contact your local forestry or fire personnel if such clearance is needed. Too often, vegetation is allowed to grow unmanaged until it becomes a critical fire hazard. Generally, when this occurs, extensive effort is required by the property owner to address the problem. Some jurisdictions have more specific requirements for brush clearance inspections. Please check



anything remaining can be quickly and easily removed, and remove all stacks of construction materials, yard waste, and other debris from your yard

- **Be ready!** Have a plan of action in place in case a wildfire occurs in your area
- Pre-cut and label materials to cover your windows and vents and store

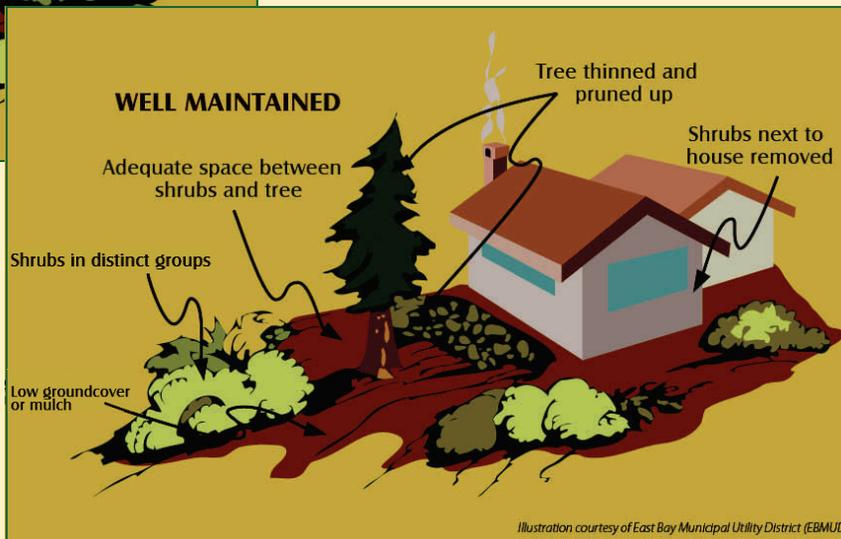
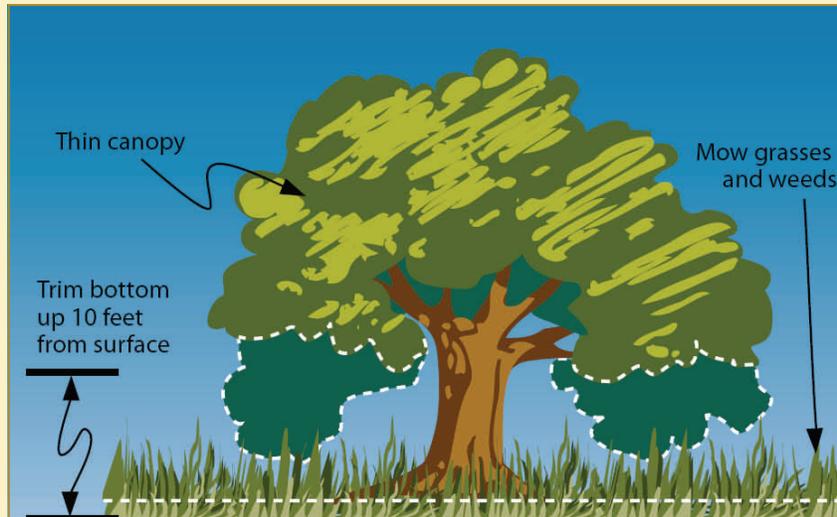


Illustration courtesy of East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD)

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with your local fire department for more information.

Inspections are usually conducted by your local fire department. Additional requirements may be made by insurers. Please contact your insurance agent or insurance company for additional information.



Pruning for Healthy Plants

Most plants will benefit from occasional corrective pruning, and all will benefit from the removal of dead wood. Time the pruning of individual plants over several years

Fire-Resistant Plant Characteristics

Remember, any plant can burn under the right conditions. For all plants, make sure to trim back and remove any dead vegetation and litter. When choosing species to plant or keep when performing fuel modification, look for plants with fire-resistant characteristics:

- Able to store water in leaves and stems
- Produce limited dead and fine material
- Extensive, deep root systems for controlling erosion
- Maintain high moisture content with limited watering
- Low-growing or prostrate form
- Open loose branches with a low volume of total vegetation
- Low levels of volatile oils or resins
- Ability to resprout after a fire
- Slow growing with little maintenance needed
- Not considered invasive

The moisture content of plants is important because high levels of plant moisture can lower fire risk and act as a heat sink, reducing the intensity and spread of fire.

Characteristics of Flammable Plants

Consider removing plants from your property and avoid purchasing new plants that tend to retain large amounts of dead material within the plant, produce a large volume of litter, and contain volatile substances such as oils, resins, wax, or pitch.

to allow them to recover. Try pruning about 1/3 of your plants in a given year, so that all are pruned at the end of three years. Regularly remove dead material and branches from your trees and shrubs. For deciduous trees and shrubs, prune before they have lost their leaves, when it is easier to see the dead branches. Hand-prune inside branches to reduce flush of growth. Hedging and shearing alone results in weak, fast growth and more fuel.



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For questions or additional information, please visit UCCE - Los Angeles and Ventura Counties at <http://ucanr.org/safelandscapes>.

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