NATURAL RESOURCES

INFORMATION SHEET

ADELAIDE HILLS COUNCIL

CALM 2711.03 PLANTING GUIDE TO LANDSCAPING IN HIGH FIRE RISK AREAS

During bushfires most property losses occur as the result of an "ember attack", when leaves and bark drift from the fire itself and lodge in and around built assets such as the home. This in turn, increases the opportunity for another fire to start.

It is the responsibility of tenants and residents to make their home and other assets relatively fire safe. There are numerous pamphlets that describe how to achieve this. One means of managing fire risk is to limit the amount of vegetation within 20 metres of buildings. This fact sheet is provided merely as a guide to assist in this process.

Vegetation may contribute to ember attack by burning intensely or causing direct flame contact with a building. Correctly positioning plants which resist intense burning can help to protect assets by creating a barrier between flying embers and your property. The efficacy of such action however is essentially dependent on the level of fire prevention maintenance undertaken around buildings throughout the year. Individual sites dictate varying plant establishment and landscape design requirements that reduce vegetation fire fuel build up in conjunction with other fire prevention strategies.

When contemplating tree and shrub establishment it is critical to consider:

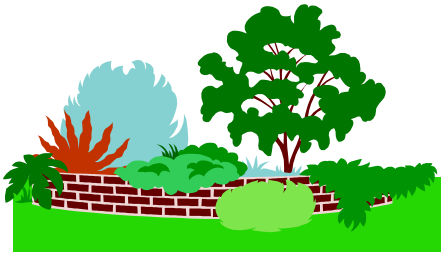
- proximity to building and other valuable assets; and
- vegetation maintenance requirements to render plants less 'fire-risky'.

Selection of the most appropriate plant species is crucial to reduce the risk of fire incidence. A plant's 'fire-related' features such as growth habit at the given site and need for maintenance must all be seriously taken into consideration. Many plant species exhibit relatively poor ability to withstand radiant heat and/or flames. Some commonly grown species around homes, farm sheds and other assets are listed overleaf. A definitive list of species is too prescriptive because of the vagaries of each case.

Characteristics to look for in plants more likely to resist 'quick ignition' include:

- high salt content as exhibited by plants like Ruby Saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa*);
- low concentration of volatile oils in leaf, small branches and outer stem – eg Inland Pigface (*Carpobrotus modestus*);
- few branches to the ground (often referred to 'having a skirt') such as Red Flowering Gum(*Eucalyptus ficifolia*)
- limited retention of leaves and twigs in canopy and mid branches such as Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*)
- limited shedding of leaves during fire risk season such as deciduous trees

An indicative list of species known to ignite earlier and/or burn more quickly during a fire incident and that are commonly grown around homes, farm sheds or other assets appear overleaf. It is important to note however, that in many instances if the plants natural form is encouraged the risk is high but when manicured or in some way adapted by regular landscaping methods the risk may decline or become negligible. Each site must be evaluated on its merits for suitability of species to establish near valuable built assets.



A SELECTION OF 'FIRE RISKY' PLANTS ~ some plant forms destined for household and general landscaping adjacent built assets that exhibit fire characteristics to avoid)

Botanical Name	Common Name
Acacia decurrens	Early Black Wattle
Acacia mearnsii	Black Wattle
Acacia paradoxa	Kangaroo Thorn
Artemisia arborescens	Mediterranean Wormwood
Arundo donax	Bamboo
Cortaderia selloana	Pampas Grass
Cupressus arizonica	Smooth Cypress
Cupressus macrocarpa	Monterey Cypress
Cupressus sempervirens	Italian / Mediterranean Cypress
Cupressus torulosa	Kashmir Cypress
Melaleuca armillaris	Bracelet Honey Myrtle
Melaleuca uncinata	Broombush
Olea europaea	Olive
Phalaris aquatica	Phalaris
Pinus halepensis	Aleppo Pine
Pinus radiata	Radiata/Monterey Pine
Tamarix aphylla	Athel Pine
Ulex europaeus	Gorse / Furze

Proximity to buildings – when establishing vegetation sites, consider:

- an understorey of lawn, pasture or ground covers under trees and shrubs adjoining buildings;
- plantings near buildings should be low hazard vegetation (establish higher hazard vegetation away from buildings);
- trees and shrubs should not be planted closer to buildings and powerlines than the distance equal to their mature height for your site;
- create gaps in vegetation at ground and canopy level from bushland settings towards built assets; and
- locate well-watered fruit trees and vegetable and ornamental gardens on the side of buildings facing the most likely direction of fire.

Vegetation Maintenance –around assets is a worthwhile fire prevention measure:

- remove trees or prune limbs overhanging buildings;
- break the path of fire from ground to tree canopy by clearing debris and flammable vegetation under trees and shrubs and by pruning lower branches to provide a vertical 2 metre fire break to the 'skirt';
- remove accumulated debris in trees and shrubs and prune dead limbs;
- water all plants surrounding buildings during the fire danger season to retain the foliage moisture content; and
- mow lawn, or maintain pasture or ground covers no taller than 100mm.

For Further Information on …

- Fire Prevention strategies - Fire Prevention Officer or regional CFS Officer
- Native Vegetation characteristics - Natural Resources Officer
- Non-native vegetation – Parks & Gardens staff