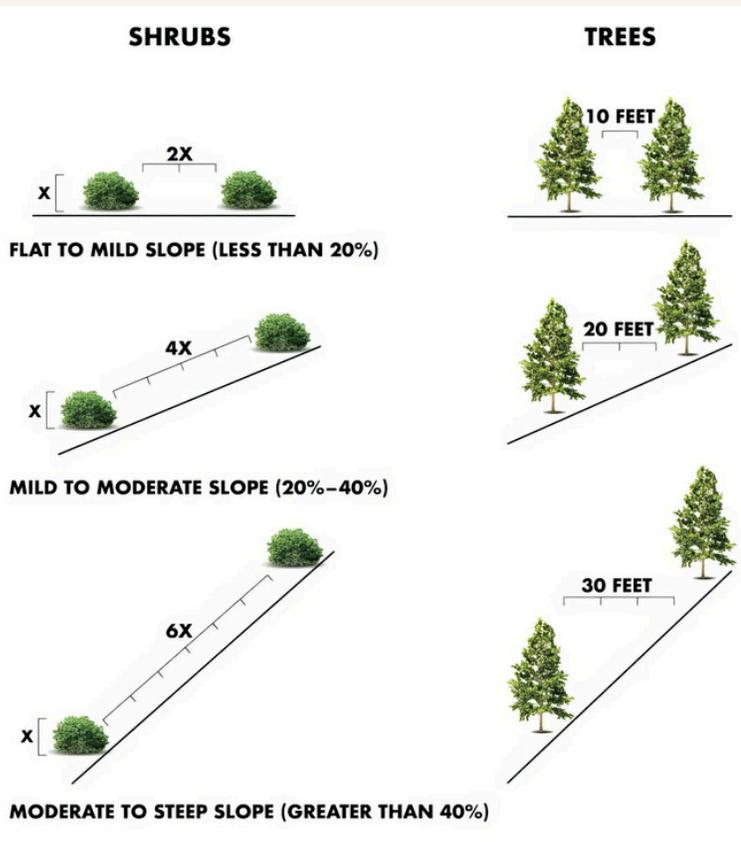


How to Care for Your Trees and Lower Fire Risk

The photo on the right shows a home burning to the ground while all the trees around it remain intact. This may seem counter intuitive, but trees are generally not a great risk to homes during a wildfire. When there is a fire, embers are the biggest danger because they can ignite flammable material where they land. However, embers tend to pass through tree canopies and collect on the ground or on rooftops.



Deputy Fire Marshall Lynn Osgood gives us insight on the relationship between houses and trees: “Homes catch trees on fire; not the other way around.



Fire Smart Recommendations

- Provide vertical and horizontal space between shrubs and trees, especially on slopes, to avoid fire ladders (taller plants catching fire from nearby lower plants). The steeper the slope, the more widely plants should be spaced.

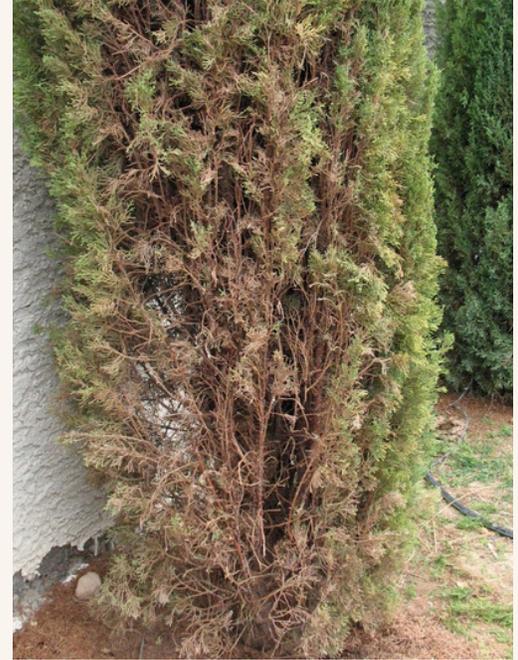
- Trim tall trees to remove limbs 6 ft to 10 ft from the ground, or up to one-third of their height.
- Remove dead or diseased branches.
- Avoid massing shrubs at the base of trees.



- Avoid topping trees as this causes excessive branching, is unhealthy for the tree, and results in twiggy growth that can increase the fire hazard.
- Remove branches within 10 feet of the chimney. Consult an arborist to consider elimination of branches that overhang the roof to minimize plant debris but not to the detriment of the health of the tree.

Hazardous Trees

There are some trees that should be removed completely because their specific characteristics make them fire prone and spread fire quickly. For example, Italian cypress (pictured to the right) has a structure that does not allow embers to fall through the canopy, instead embers are caught in a dead interior that ignites quickly. Also remove bamboo and juniper and make sure to regularly maintain eucalyptus trees by cleaning up the bark and leaves from the ground.



Maintenance Throughout Your Yard

Rake the leaves around your home (prioritize the 5 feet around your home) and put them in your green bin. It is important not to leave piles of dead or dry vegetation. Even if you have rocks or gravel around your home, remove any leaf litter or debris that has ended up on top of the material. Choose a fire resistant mulch for directly around your home. Inorganic mulches such as decomposed granite, gravel, or rocks are recommended. Here is a [FireSmart Yard Checklist](#) for more maintenance tips.

By taking these simple steps, you can help protect your home, your trees, and your loved ones from the threat of wildfire.



**Learn about the FREE
Marin [Chipper Day](#) program funded by
Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority**