



BIGHORN BASIN FIRESMART



BIGHORN BASIN FIREWISE COMMUNITIES

ISSUE #17 — WINTER 2015

The 2014 wildfire season was a mild one without fires testing Firewise in the Bighorn Basin communities. Bill Crapser, Wyoming State Forester, reported that it was one of the mildest Wyoming fire seasons on record. Other western states were not as fortunate. Hundreds of homes were lost in Washington and California.

2014 Firewise activity in Big Horn and Washakie counties included:

- ◇ More than 25 Firewise cabin/home evaluations and Wildfire Mitigation Plans prepared.
- ◇ Three issues of the Bighorn Basin Firesmart newsletter. The last two issues went to approximately 1,000 Basin Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) residents.
- ◇ A Firewise display at the Lovell Earth Day event in April
- ◇ Participation in the Canyon Creek Country Firewise Community work day.
- ◇ Submitted applications for establishment of the West Ten Sleep and Canyon Creek Village subdivisions into the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program.
- ◇ Two Bighorn Mountain Firewise cabin-owner picnics.
- ◇ Applied for forest fuels and bark beetle funding to do 131 acres of forest thinning and fuels reduction in Big Horn County. No Bighorn Basin counties were funded.
- ◇ Reactivation of the Washakie County Firewise Operating Group to discuss upgrades to that county's Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).
- ◇ Revising the Washakie County Communities-at-Risk mapping.
- ◇ Developed Landowner Forest Stewardship Plans for Meadowlark Ski Resort, and the Canyon Creek Village subdivision.

Firewise plans for 2015:

- ◇ Four issues of Bighorn Basin Firesmart to 1,000+ cabin and home-owners in the basin.
- ◇ 10-13 acres of timber thinning and fuels reduction.
- ◇ 20 cabin and home Wildfire Mitigation Plans.
- ◇ Participation in Firewise Community annual work days and mountain cabin picnics.
- ◇ Firewise presence at the Washakie County Fair is being considered.
- ◇ Application for thinning and fuels reduction funds for Washakie and Big Horn counties.
- ◇ Working with the Washakie Firewise County Operating Group to upgrade the CWPP.

JT Wensman has been selected as the new *Assistant Fire Management Officer – Fuels* for the Wyoming State Forestry Division. The duties of this position include coordination of State and National funding for the Firewise programs within Wyoming. JT replaces Nick Williams, who has taken a position in the Carolinas. Mr. Wensman will work out of the Cheyenne office.

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THE BIG HORN BASIN FIREWISE COORDINATORS ARE:

Big Horn County: The County Fire Warden is Brent Godfrey (307) 568-2324. The Firewise Coordinator is Chris Weydeveld, cweydeveld@wytfs.com, Technical Forestry Services, LLC, 6628 W. Riverside Dr. Casper, Wyoming 82604, or (307) 333-1098 (office), (307) 272-9533 (mobile).

Washakie County: Chris Kocher, Fire Warden, ckocher@worlandfire.org, P.O. Box 504, Worland, Wyoming 82401, or (307) 347-6379. The Firewise Coordinator is Chris Weydeveld, cweydeveld@wytfs.com, Technical Forestry Services, LLC, 6628 W. Riverside Dr. Casper, Wyoming 82604, or (307) 333-1098 (office), (307) 272-9533 (mobile).

Hot Springs County: No Firewise Coordinator has yet been selected. Contact Jay Duvall, County Fire Warden, at (307) 921-1485, or hscdwarden@gmail.com

Park County : Bernie Spanogle, Firewise Coordinator, can be reached at pcfirewise@gmail.com. or at 307-250-9387. The County Fire Warden is Russ Wenke, rwenke@parkcounty.us, 1131 11th Street, Cody, Wyoming 82414, or (307) 527-8551.

The basin Firewise website is being updated, but isn't quite ready.

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If you have general or specific questions about Firewise, two good online sources of answers are: www.firewisewyoming.com and www.livingwithfire.com.

Do you have topics you would like included in future newsletters? Please submit your suggestions and comments to firewise@wytfs.com, to Chris Weydeveld at any of the above phone numbers, or by mail to G. Wynn, 824 Country Club Road, Casper, Wyoming 82609.

Thanks for providing this newsletter go to the Wyoming State Forestry Division, the Big Horn and Washakie County Fire Wardens, and the U.S. Forest Service. They provide the funding.

This newsletter is provided as a service of your county's Firewise Coordinator. If you choose not to receive future issues, please respond to firewise@wytfs.com, or to Big Horn/Washakie Firewise (6628 W. Riverside Drive, Casper, Wyoming 82604) by mail.



PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM WILDFIRE

A GUIDE FOR HOME-OWNERS, HOME-BUYERS, AND HOME-BUILDERS

FIREWISE WYOMING
the Natrona County Project

This has been prepared as a cooperative effort of the Firewise-Wyoming Mitigation Project. Wyoming State Forestry Division, Casper Mountain Fire Department, Casper Mountain Forest Stewardship Association, Natrona County Fire Department, Casper Fire Department, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, a Wyoming Community Foundation Grant, and a National Fire Plan Grant.

PROTECTING YOUR HOME FROM WILDFIRE

—A GUIDE FOR HOME-OWNERS, HOME-BUYERS, AND HOME-BUILDERS, is your basic handbook for being Firewise in Wyoming. Inside are twenty pages of information that could save your home or cabin. Some of the topics are:

- ⇒ What to do when a fire occurs
- ⇒ Emergency Plan Checklist
- ⇒ Creating Defensible Space
- ⇒ Firewise Landscape Plants
- ⇒ Driveways and Access Roads
- ⇒ Location and Home Sites

Your County Firewise Coordinator has copies of this publication, as does any office of the Wyoming State Forestry Division. It can also be viewed at www.firewisewyoming.com

FIRE IN WYOMING FORESTS

Fire has been an important natural disturbance in the forests of Wyoming since the most recent ice age left parts of the state forested. In fact, most native plant and animal species in Wyoming's forest need occasional fire for continued healthy growth and survival. Periodic fires develop the habitat and food for animals, and many trees and other plants need fire's heat in order for seeds to sprout.

Until the coming from Asia of the people that became the First Americans, fires were started by lightning, a natural ignition, and often burned large areas of forest before winter snows put them out. These fires burned some areas every 5 to 10 years with low-intensity fires. In other areas, at intervals of up to 100 years, hot fires killed almost all of the trees, and made room for a new forest. The results were large areas that grew new healthy plants.



Cool fire burning leaves and needles

Hot fire killing almost all of the trees



For the next 10-13,000 years, these nomadic people lit the grasslands and forests on fire to promote growth of the plants that they ate or used for other purposes, as signals to other people, and to herd animals over cliffs in order to obtain meat. Once they had horses, they sometimes burned forests and prairies to improve the grass for their herds. If fire (natural or otherwise) threatened their homes, they moved away to another campsite.

When the European-Americans moved west and settled in Wyoming, fires were a fact of life in the forest. Besides those started by lightning and careless humans, fires were sometimes started to clear land for farming and grazing. Since their homes were not as portable as those of the Indians, they did fight some fires to protect their homes, crops, and livestock.

As the 19th Century ended, Wyoming residents started putting out more fires in order to protect their forest homes, the valuable timber resource, and the scenic vistas that they didn't want changed. For the next 100 years, humans put out all fires in the forest.

By the end of the 20th Century, the forest that hadn't burned for a hundred years had many more trees than had been there before fires were all put out. The results of this higher tree density were:

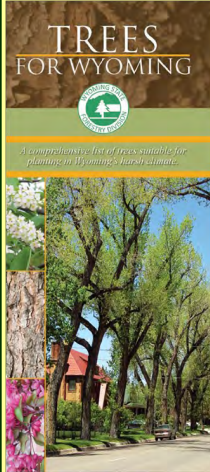
- Overcrowded trees subject to insect attacks that killed trees over large areas.
- Increased fuel for fires when they did burn. Fires burned hotter, and were hard to put out.
- The shade from dense trees killed many of the smaller plants used as food by wildlife, and prevented growth of some of the tree species important to a natural forest.
- Trees and plants that need fire to reproduce, died, and disappeared from parts of the forest.

And all of this was complicated by more people building homes in and near the forest, and a bigger need to protect them from fire. To reduce the damage to forest homes, home-owners are now being taught how to fix their homes to resist forest fire damage.

Presently, to return some of the forest to a "natural" and healthy condition, foresters have begun letting lightning fires burn in a few wilderness areas where there are no human buildings that can burn. They have also started lighting a few intentional fires to reduce the tree density, and encourage the growth of plants needed for a healthy forest. The future will see more of these "prescribed" fires in Wyoming forests, but only when lit by specially trained foresters.

There will be fires in the future Wyoming forest.

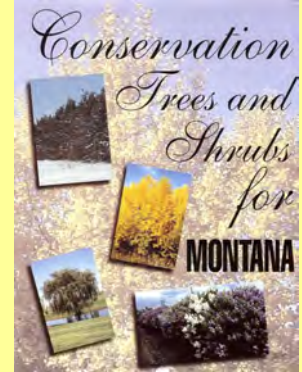
WHAT TO PLANT AROUND YOUR HOME AND CABIN



Past newsletters have mentioned which plants, shrubs, and trees are most suitable for a Firewise landscaping around your home and cabin. Here are a few available publications that will help you select some that are adapted to the Wyoming climate.

Some plants may not be the best for a Firewise application, so you should refer to Page 20 of the **PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM WILDFIRE** guidebook mentioned on page 2.

TREES FOR WYOMING is a good guide found at Wyoming State Forestry Division offices. "*Conservation Trees and Shrubs for Montana*" is another reference. It is available through your local NRCS office.



Landscaping: Water-Wise Wyoming Gardens

B-1143 <http://www.wyomingextension.org/agpubs/pubs/B1143.pdf>

Publication Author(s) : "Panter, Karen L."

Description:

"Watering restrictions in Wyoming are becoming more the norm than the exception. Many areas in the state are high-elevation deserts, and some areas receive less than 10 inches of precipitation each year. This makes landscape water issues necessities rather than options. Landscaping: Water-Wise Wyoming Gardens suggests a step-by-step approach for incorporating plant types from annuals to evergreens that do not require much water into a garden or xeriscape. Gardening: Growing Herbs in Wyoming explains how to grow, cultivate, dry and preserve herbs and includes charts that contain planting and harvesting instructions, lists of culinary uses, and descriptions of individual characteristics for 16 popular herbs."

Landscaping: Herbaceous Perennials for Wyoming

B-1152 <http://www.wyomingextension.org/agpubs/pubs/B1152.pdf>

Publication Author(s) : "Panter, Karen L."

Description:

"Herbaceous perennials are non-woody plants which live more than two years and usually die back to the ground every fall. They are important in Wyoming gardens and landscapes because of their diversity in flowering time, foliage color and texture, flower color and size, and winter interest. Perennial blossoms are usually quite attractive, and some may bloom early in the season before annuals can even be planted. There are literally thousands of species, many of which will thrive in Wyoming. Landscaping: Herbaceous Perennials for Wyoming gives tips on raising dozens of different plants and also discusses soil and bed preparation, planting, watering, mulching, fertilizing, staking, pests, fall clean-up, and winter care."

Landscaping: Flowering Annuals for Wyoming

B-1170 <http://www.wyomingextension.org/agpubs/pubs/B1170.pdf>

Publication Author(s) : "Panter, Karen L."

Description:

"Annuals are highly important in Wyoming gardens and landscapes because of their diversity in foliage color and texture, flower color and size, and adaptability. Annual blossoms are quite colorful and plants will bloom all growing season. There are hundreds of species and cultivars available, most of which will thrive in Wyoming. Here's how."

Low-Maintenance Grasses for Revegetating Disturbed Areas and Lawns

B-107 <http://www.wyomingextension.org/agpubs/pubs/B1070.pdf>

Publication Author(s) : "Koch, David W." "Hybner, Roger"

Description:

"Revegetating construction and landscape areas prevents soil erosion from wind and water and stops the problems associated with air- and waterborne soil particles. These areas usually have limited topsoil, mixed topsoil and subsoil, continual dryness, low fertility, and high erosion potential. Low Maintenance Grasses for Revegetating Disturbed Areas and Lawns is a five-page bulletin that describes the different species of grasses and the alternatives to bluegrass lawns. Kentucky bluegrass has been one of the standard choices for lush, green, carpet-like turf, but many people conceive the time and cost of maintenance of bluegrass lawns as too great. However, Kentucky bluegrass varieties that require less water are now available."

Landscaping: Recommended Trees for Wyoming

B-109 <http://www.wyomingextension.org/agpubs/pubs/B1090.pdf>

Publication Author(s) : "Panter, Karen L." "Ewart, Emily E."

Description:

"Wyoming's harsh climate poses many challenges to successfully growing trees throughout the state. The mountains, plains, and arid desert regions all have their own environments, which affect the types of trees that will survive in those areas. According to the authors, "Properly placing a tree in the landscape is one of the most important issues surrounding tree survival in Wyoming." Landscaping: Recommended trees for Wyoming offers advice to homeowners and landscapers on site selection, buying trees, and planting and maintaining them. This eight-page bulletin identifies 50 popular species and lists hardiness zones and maximum elevation for tree growth."

Landscaping: Recommended Shrubs for Wyoming

B-110 <http://www.wyomingextension.org/agpubs/pubs/B-1108.pdf>

Publication Author(s) : "Panter, Karen L." "Ewart, Emily E."

Description:

"Growing woody plants in Wyoming can be a challenge, especially in areas of high elevation or low precipitation. For some locations in the state, both factors must be taken into consideration. Landscaping: Recommended shrubs for Wyoming discusses principles to know when deciding which shrubs to plant. For example, the climate cannot be changed, but the gardener can create micro-climates that amplify shrubs potential for long-term survival. According to the authors, "Proper placement of shrubs in the landscape is one of the most important factors affecting shrub survival in Wyoming.""

Landscaping: Turf in Wyoming

B-112 <http://www.wyomingextension.org/agpubs/pubs/B1129.pdf>

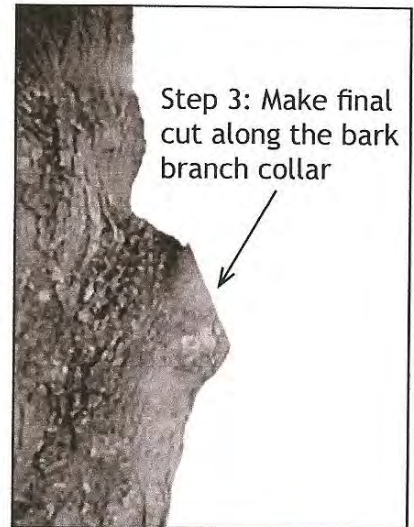
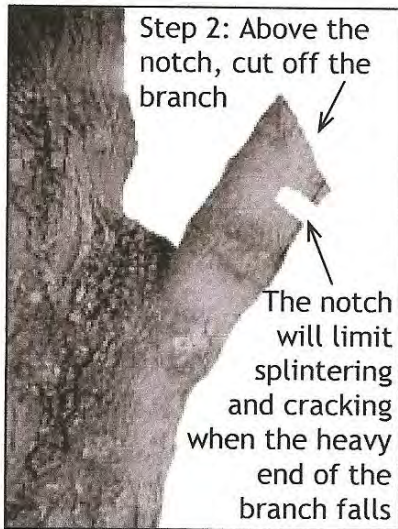
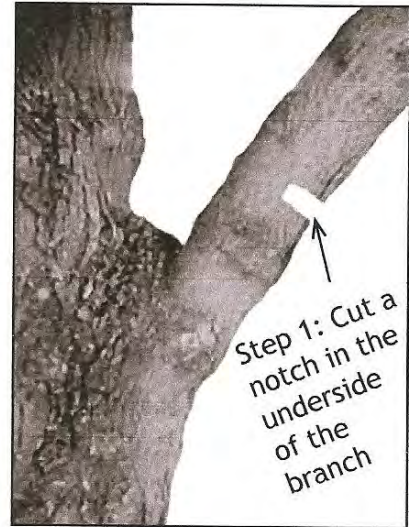
Publication Author(s) : "Panter, Karen L." "Koski, Tony J." "Hybner, Roger M."

Description:

"The lawn has become one of the most important parts of the home landscape. It enhances a property's looks, value, and livability. It serves an aesthetic purpose and is also useful. A lawn is a ground cover intended to protect the home from the mud and dust of the outside world. Landscaping: turf in Wyoming explains how to select and care for lawn grasses that are best suited for particular areas and uses. The bulletin analyzes the basic species of turfgrasses that are appropriate for planting in Wyoming."



A FEW TREE PRUNING TIPS



Pruning Do's

Remove live branches from hardwood trees during late winter or early spring, when the tree is dormant.

Conifer trees may be limbed any time, except during early summer.

When deciding which live branches to remove, first choose those with poor health or little green foliage.

Next, choose branches that are damaged, diseased, or interfering with other branches.

Remove dead branches any time of the year.

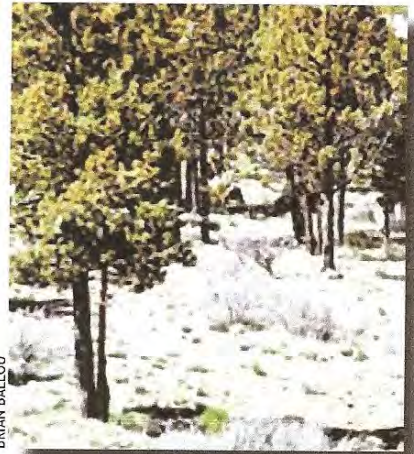
Use sharp tools and make clean cuts.

Pruning Don'ts

Painting wound dressing on pruning cuts is unnecessary and can actually hurt the tree by causing the pruning cut to seal slower.

Cutting branches flush with the trunk will rob the tree of natural chemicals used to close the wound. This will lead to decay in the tree.

Never remove more than one-third of a tree's live crown. 🌳

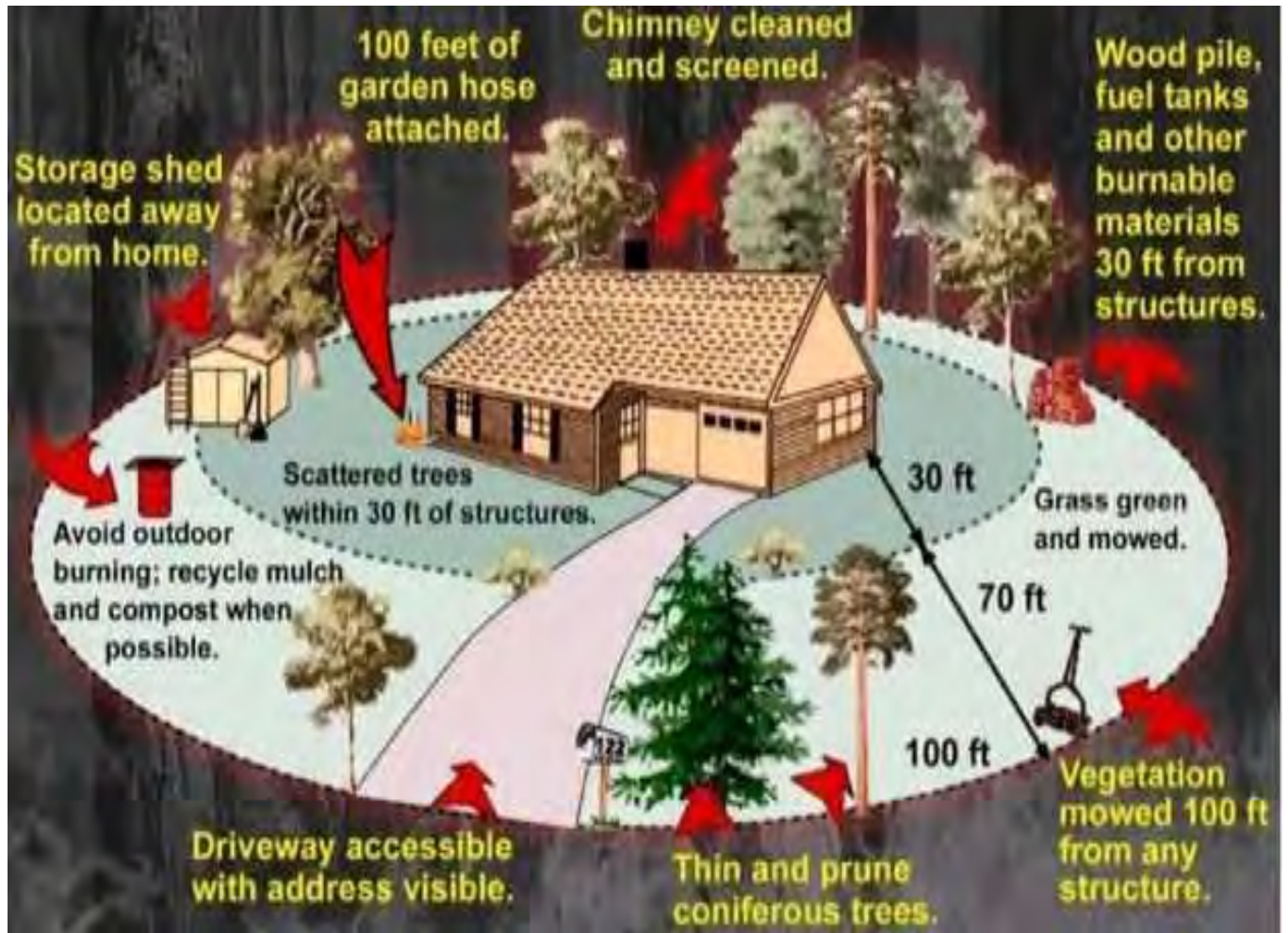


BRIAN BALLOU

More detailed tree pruning tools, techniques, and timing information can be found in the *Wyoming Tree Owner's Manual* available from Wyoming State Forestry Division offices.

YOUR HOME IGNITION ZONE (HIZ)

Another version of the diagram that is your basic guide to having a Firewise home or cabin.



And here are a few of the many **LITTLE THINGS** that are important within your HIZ.



This one photo shows at least three **LITTLE THINGS THAT MATTER.**

- 1) Wooden construction material leaning against the home.
- 2) Flammable liquids stored outside of a closed location.
- 3) The basement door should be kept closed during fire season.

Big Horn/Washakie Firewise
6628 W. Riverside Drive
Casper, Wyoming 82604



NEWS OF IMPORTANCE TO WASHAKIE AND NEIGHBORING COUNTIES

February 1 the Ten Sleep District fire hall exploded and burned, along with the fire trucks and other firefighting gear that were inside.

The County Fire Warden and the Fire District are busily making plans for replacing the destroyed building and apparatus. They are presently accepting cash donations that would be greatly appreciated. Donations should be sent to:

TEN SLEEP VFD

P.O. BOX 405

TEN SLEEP, WYOMING 82442



You can now keep up on daily news and events with Bighorn Basin Firewise. Go to: <https://www.facebook.com/bighornbasin.firewise>