

# REDUCING THE FIRE RISK IN YOUR GARDEN



## Fact Sheet 1

Fire is a natural part of the Tasmanian landscape and plays a vital role in sustaining many ecosystems.

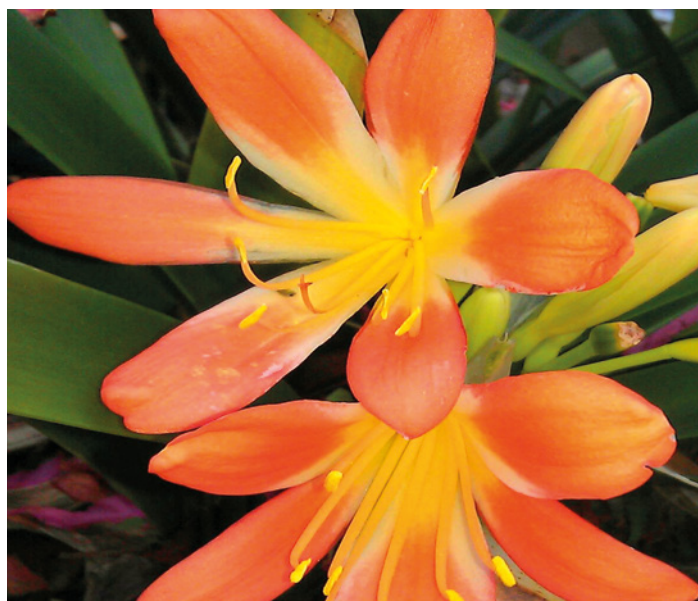
Every Tasmanian household, whether living in rural, coastal, bush, or urban environments, should include their garden in their Bushfire Survival Plan.

Attention to garden design, plant selection, materials and maintenance of garden environments is critical to reduce the vulnerability of homes and gardens to bushfire.

Your Bushfire Survival Plan for your property should have a designated defensible space.

Vegetation and other fuels in the defensible space should be kept to a minimum, and maintained at a low level.

The size of your defensible space depends on many factors such as slope, aspect, and proximity to potential bushfire hazards such as nearby vegetation.



# GARDEN DESIGN TO REDUCE FIRE RISK



## Fact Sheet 2

Considerations include:

- Plant selection – choose low flammability plants
- Plant location – where to place plants in your defensible space
- Leaf litter or mulch hazards – choosing the least flammable mulch (such as gravel)
- Keeping the moisture levels up to your plants over the bushfire danger period (Oct to March)
- Hard landscaping or mown lawns
- Windbreaks
- Plant maintenance – maintain the health of your plants, so they are less susceptible to fire such as trimming off dead branches.



# FIRE-RESISTING GARDEN PLANTS

## Fact Sheet 3



The flammability of a plant is determined by how readily it burns and by plant type or shape. How readily a plant burns depends on things like moisture, or mineral content of leaves.

Characteristics of plants with low flammability include:

- High moisture content
- Broad fleshy leaves
- Low and compact
- Does not retain dead material
- Smooth trunks
- Low/no volatile oil content.

Remember all plants, even succulents, can burn in extreme fire events.

These plants are examples of low flammability plants.

### Native Plants:

- *Diplarrena moraea* – white flag-iris
- *Pelargonium australe* – native geranium
- *Carpobrotus rossii* – native pigface.

### Exotic Plants:

- *Camellia sp.* – camellia
- *Hebe speciosa* – veronica
- Vegetables, including capsicums, eggplant, cabbage and chillies.



White flag-iris – *Diplarrena moraea*



Native pigface – *Carpobrotus rossii*



Camelia – *Camellia sp.*

- *Prunus sp.* – plum.

Remember, all plants can burn and maintenance is vital.

# PLANNING A GARDEN FOR FIRE PROTECTION?



## Fact Sheet 4

It is important to assess your garden design in view of any likely fire risk.

Plants close to dwellings, especially those on the side of a building most likely to face an oncoming fire, should be low growing, low flammability and remain green over summer. This includes lawns and well watered vegetable gardens and fruit trees.

Ensure that there is not a continuous canopy or line of vegetation leading directly to a dwelling.

Be mindful of the full height or shape of any trees or shrubs you plant, and ensure they are planted away from powerlines.

Consider planting or building a windbreak to reduce the wind speed, deflect and filter embers, and provide a shield from radiant heat.



# LANDSCAPING TO REDUCE FIRE RISK

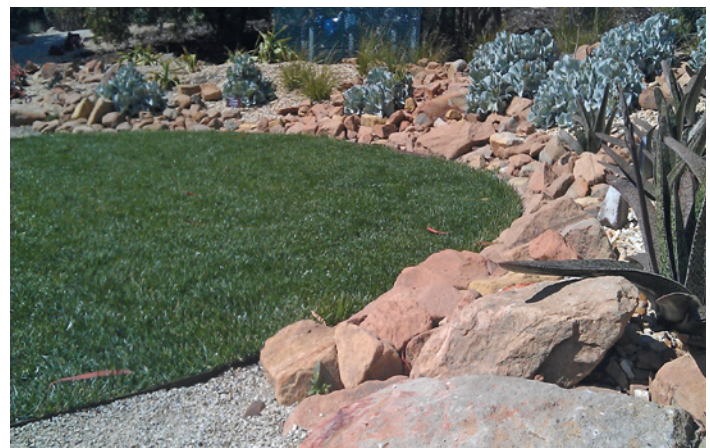
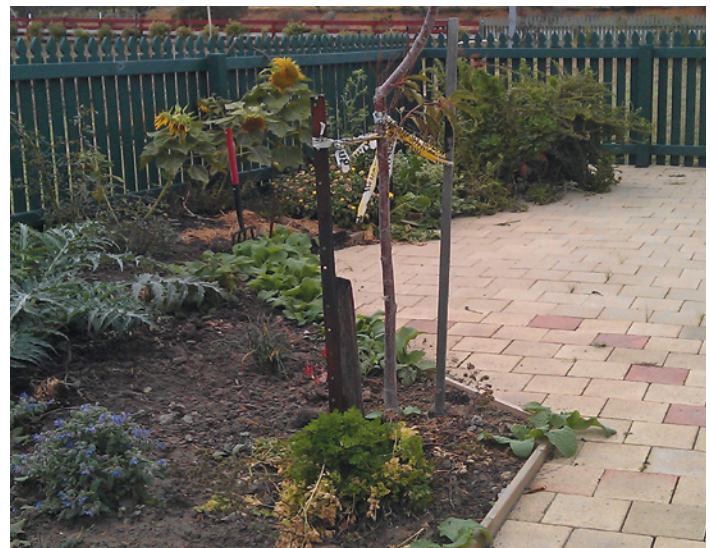
## Fact Sheet 5



Maintaining a clear area or defensible space around your home with a short lawn or with hard landscaping will reduce the fire risk to your home and garden. This is particularly important on the side of the home that a fire is most likely to approach.

Some options include:

- Concrete, brick, stone or gravel paths, driveways, decks, and garden edging.
- Gravel or pebble mulch rather than pine bark, wood chips, or straw, to reduce litter hazards.
- A living mulch of ground cover plants with low flammability is another option.
- Build a stone or gabion wall, a non combustible fence or even an earth mound, as a radiant shield.
- Dams or ponds, swimming pools and tennis courts can be used as buffers.



# MULCH AND IRRIGATION FOR FIRE-PRONE GARDENS



## Fact Sheet 6

Mulch can conserve moisture in your garden beds, and help your plants maintain a higher moisture level. However, some mulches dry out quickly and can become a fire hazard. Some mulches can burn for days, and some will fly around readily in a fire, spreading embers and sparks to other areas of your home and garden.

Use non-organic mulch such as pebbles, particularly in your defendable space. Pebble mulches have the added bonus of adding minerals to the soil.

A living mulch of ground cover plants with low flammability is another option.

Consider installing irrigation for your garden, particularly in your defendable space.

