

# Fire-Resistant Plants for Oregon Home Landscapes

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## Introduction

When landscaping around a home, most homeowners are interested in creating a landscape that is aesthetically pleasing, complements their home, and has variations in color, texture, flowers, and foliage. If your home is located in or adjacent to forests or rangeland, you also should consider the flammability of plants within your home landscape.

Flammable plant material in your landscape can increase the fire-risk around your home. The 1991 Oakland Hills Fire in California is a prime example of how flammable plant material (Eucalyptus trees) can act as fuel and contribute to the intensity of a wildfire. Over 3,000 homes were destroyed in that devastating wildfire.

Therefore, homeowners should take active steps to minimize or reduce the fuel and fire-hazard around their homes, *including* planting fire-resistant plants. Good placement of fire-resistant trees, for example, can, in fact, help protect your home by blocking intense heat.

There is a wide array of trees and other plants to choose for your landscape that are both attractive (Figure 1) and fire-safe. This publication provides a diverse list of plant material divided into perennials, groundcovers, trees, and shrubs.

## What are fire-resistant plants?

Fire resistant plants are plants that don't readily ignite from a flame or other ignition sources. Although fire-resistant plants can be damaged or even killed by fire, their foliage and stems don't contribute significantly to the fuel and, there-



Figure 1. Basket-of-Gold beneath Quaking Aspen; both are fire-resistant.

fore, the fire's intensity.

Plants that are fire-resistant have the following characteristics:

- Leaves are moist and supple.
- Plants that have little dead wood and tend not to accumulate dry, dead material within the plant.
- Sap is water-like and does not have a strong odor.

Most deciduous trees and shrubs are fire-resistant. However, it's important to remember that even fire-resistant plants can burn, particularly if they are not maintained in a healthy condition.

In contrast, plants that are highly flammable have these general characteristics:

- Contain fine, dry or dead material within the plant such as twigs, needles, and leaves.

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# Fire-Resistant Plant Materials for Oregon

## Groundcovers 18" and lower

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Carpet bugle	<i>Echeveria species</i>	Hens and chicks
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Kinnikinnick	<i>Fragaria species</i>	Wild strawberry
<i>Ceanothus prostratus</i>	Mahala mat (C,E,S)	<i>Pachysandra terminalis</i>	Japanese pachysandra (W,S)
<i>Cerastium tomentosum</i>	Snow -in-summer	<i>Phlox subulata</i>	Creeping phlox
<i>Delosperma nubigenum</i>	Yellow iceplant	<i>Sedum species</i>	Sedum or stonecrops
<i>Delosperma cooperi</i>	Purple/Pink iceplant	<i>Thymus praecox</i>	Creeping thyme
<i>Duchesnea indica</i>	Mock strawberry		

## Perennials 18" or taller

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<i>Achillea species</i>	Yarrow	<i>Hemerocallis hybrids</i>	Daylilies
<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>	Chives	<i>Heuchera species</i>	Coral bells
<i>Armeria maritima</i>	Sea thrift	<i>Hosta species</i>	Hosta lilies
<i>Aurinia saxatilis</i>	Basket-of-Gold	<i>Iris hybrids</i>	Tall bearded iris
<i>Bergenia cordifolia</i>	Heartleaf bergenia	<i>Kniphofia uvuria</i>	Red-hot poker
<i>Carex species</i>	Sedges	<i>Linum perenne</i>	Blue flax
<i>Coreopsis species</i>	Coreopsis	<i>Lupinus species</i>	Lupine
<i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>	Fireweed	<i>Oenothera missouriensis</i>	Evening primrose
<i>Geranium species</i>	Cranesbill	<i>Penstemon species</i>	Penstemon
<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Sun rose	<i>Stachys byzantina</i>	Lamb's ear

## Shrubs—broadleaf evergreen

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<i>Cotoneaster apiculatus</i>	Cranberry cotoneaster	<i>Mahonia repens</i>	Creeping holly
<i>Daphne x burkwoodii</i> var. 'Carol Mackie'	Carol Mackie daphne	<i>Pachystima myrsinites</i>	Oregon boxwood
<i>Gaultheria shallon</i>	Salal (S,W)	<i>Rhododendron macrophyllum</i>	Pacific rhododendron (S,W)
<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	Oregon grapeholly	<i>Rhododendron occidentale</i>	Western azalea (S,W)
		<i>Yucca species</i>	Yucca

## Shrubs—deciduous

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<i>Acer circinatum</i>	Vine maple	<i>Rhus species</i>	Sumac
<i>Acer glabrum</i>	Rocky Mountain maple	<i>Ribes species</i>	Currant
<i>Amelanchier species</i>	Serviceberry	<i>Rosa woodsii</i>	Wood's rose
<i>Caryopeteris x clandonensis</i>	Blue-mist spirea	<i>Spiraea x bumalda species</i>	Spirea
<i>Cornus stolonifera</i>	Redtwig dogwood	<i>Spiraea douglasii</i>	Western spirea
<i>Euonymus alatus</i>	Burning bush	<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	Snowberry
<i>Holodiscus discolor</i>	Oceanspray	<i>Syringa species</i>	Lilac
<i>Philadelphus species</i>	Mockorange		

## Trees—conifer

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<i>Larix occidentalis</i>	Western larch (C,E)	<i>Pinus ponderosa</i>	Ponderosa pine

## Trees—deciduous

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<i>Acer macrophyllum</i>	Bigleaf maple (S,W)	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	Honeylocust
<i>Acer rubra</i> var. <i>Sunset</i>	Sunset maple	<i>Gymnocladus dioica</i>	Kentucky coffee tree
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Horsechestnut	<i>Juglans species</i>	Walnut
<i>Alnus rubra</i>	Red alder (S,W)	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	American sweetgum (S,W)
<i>Alnus tenuifolia</i>	Mountain alder (C,E)	<i>Malus species</i>	Crabapple
<i>Betula species</i>	Birch	<i>Populus species</i>	Aspen/cottonwoods
<i>Catalpa speciosa</i>	Western catalpa	<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	Chokecherry
<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	Common hackberry	<i>Quercus garryana</i>	Oregon white oak (S,W)
<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Eastern redbud	<i>Quercus palustris</i>	Pin oak
<i>Cornus florida</i>	Flowering dogwood (S,W)	<i>Quercus rubra</i>	Red oak
<i>Fagus species</i>	Beech	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i> 'Purple Robe'	Purple robe locust
<i>Fraxinus species</i>	Ash	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Mountain ash

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- Leaves, twigs, and stems contain volatile waxes, terpenes, or oils.
- Leaves are aromatic (strong smell when crushed)
- Sap is gummy, resinous and has a strong odor.
- May have loose or papery bark.

Both ornamental and native plants can be highly flammable. An example of a highly flammable ornamental shrub often planted in home landscapes is ornamental juniper. Examples of highly flammable native shrubs include bitterbrush, manzanita, sagebrush, and ceanothus. Avoid planting these plants around your home.

*-Adapted from University of California Cooperative Extension Hortscript, 1996, No. 18.*

### How this list was developed

This list was developed by evaluating fire-resistant plant lists developed for other regions and screening the scientific literature on plant flammability. Included in this list are plants adapted to grow *in* Oregon in either irrigated or non-irrigated landscapes. However, most of the plants on this list require some level of irrigation to survive during the dry summer months, particularly in central and eastern Oregon.

All of these plants are adaptable in Oregon unless specified by a C, E, S, or W. Plants indicated by these letters are suitable only for the regions listed below:

C = Central Oregon      E = Eastern Oregon  
S = Southern Oregon    W = Western Oregon

### Plant descriptions and availability

For a detailed description of the plants on this list, consult local nurseries or refer to the Sunset Western Garden Book and the A-Z Encyclopedia

Figure 2.

Purple Iceplant



of Garden Plants. These publications can be obtained at local bookstores or nurseries. If you are unable to find some of these plants locally, check out the Oregon Association of Nurserymen's website for plant availability at:

<http://www.nurseryguide.com>

Scroll down to "Search For..." and click on Plants by Name. Type in the name of the plant your interested in and the search will give you a list of nurseries that carry the plant.

### Help us identify other fire-resistant plants

If you know of other fire-resistant plants suitable for Oregon, let us know. We will research your plant and, if it fits the criteria, we will add it to the list. Contact us at:

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To download this color publication off our website, go to <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/deschutes/FireResPlants06.pdf>

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