Fire Wise LANDSCAPING

If you live in a woodland setting or a wooded lot:

- Create a defensible space (about 30-100 feet) around your home. In this area, use plants that grow close to the ground, have a high moisture and low resin content. Plants such as the junipers are highly flammable.
- If planting trees, hardwood trees are more fire resistant than pines, evergreen, or fir trees.
- Reduce amount and types of fuels. Keep tree branches away from chimneys, keep roofs and gutters free of dead leaves and other debris.
- Eliminate ladder fuels that allow a fire to climb into low hanging branches. Prune trees six to ten feet up within your defensive zone.
- Remove dead leaves, brush and shrubbery on a regular schedule.
- Design access roadways wide enough for emergency vehicle access. Usually at least 20 feet wide with a 13.5 foot overhead clearance.
- Create fire breaks. Plant in islands. Walkways and well maintained turf grass can be an excellent firebreak.
- Limit use of flammable mulches such as pine straw, especially within your defensible zone.

Wind Resistant LANDSCAPING

- No tree is completely “wind resistant” but some trees do perform better than others.
- Healthy, well maintained and properly pruned trees have better wind resistance. Healthy, uncompacted, properly drained soil is the first step towards a healthy tree.
- Native species do better than non-native species.
- The sabal palmetto, longleaf pine, southern magnolia, dogwood, and live oaks have the best wind resistance.
- The Chinese tallow, or “popcorn tree,” pecans, red maples, and sweet gums have poor wind resistance and aren’t recommended for planting near homes.
- Trees do not “heal wounds,” they just grow over them and seal them off. These old injuries are weak structurally, and could fail under high winds.
- Trees worth saving should be properly protected during construction.
- Consider the adult size of the tree when planting. Some trees have large growth patterns and should not be planted too close to your home.
- Remember, most of the trees feeder roots are near the surface. Never plant turfgrass or flowerbeds right up to the trunk of a tree.
- Remove a tree when it has internal decay or rot, a construction injury that can’t be repaired, the stability of the tree has been affected, any pine with over 30% damage.

Flood Resistant LANDSCAPING

- Keep yards free of leaves, pine needles and other debris that can be washed away during heavy rains, and keep debris from accumulating in streets and curbsides that can be washed into storm drains causing clogs.
- Retention ponds are designed to hold storm water run off and prevent minor flooding. The ponds also give pollutants time to settle out of the water. Ditches, canals and retention ponds can become overgrown with vegetation or filled with silt, which lessens their capacity.
- Work through your community or neighborhood group to insure that retention ponds, and canals in your area are properly maintained and that storm water drains and ditches in your community are kept clear and free flowing.
- Support the establishment of “vegetated riparian buffers” in your community. Riparian buffers are corridors of natural vegetation lining rivers, ditches, ponds, and canals. These buffers slow storm water runoff, bind sediments, prevent erosion, and provide fish and wildlife habitat.
- Mulch, or otherwise cover areas of bare earth to prevent erosion of topsoil into waterways or ponds. Establishing turf grass is one quick and easy method.

Salt Tolerant

LANDSCAPING

Salt tolerant plants may appear ragged after extreme exposures, but they will survive. Plants sensitive to salt or "non salt tolerant" will simply die.

A plant's salt tolerance should be a consideration when landscaping near beaches or waterways. Coastal waterways and marshes all have some salt intrusion.

For coastal lawns, Bermuda, zoysia, and St. Augustine grasses have good salt tolerance, while centipede does not.

TREES:

Japanese black pine, Southern magnolia, Eastern red cedar, Live oaks, Yaupon, Russian olive, Salt cedars, Cabbage palms or Sabal palmettos have a high salt tolerance.

Crepe myrtles, Longleaf pines, Leyland cypress, and Norway maples are moderately tolerant and should be protected from direct ocean spray.

SALT TOLERANT SHRUBS:

Saltshrub, Dwarf yaupons, Butcher's broom, Northern bayberry, Pittosporum, Wax myrtles, Yucca, Oleanders, Indian Hawthorn, and Viburnum are a few examples.

SALT TOLERANT GROUND COVERS:

English ivy, Northern sea oats, Zamia, Virginia creeper, Creeping juniper, Cord grass, Carolina Jessamine, Creeping fig, Wintercreeper, and Algerian ivy are some Salt tolerant groundcovers.

Remember: A plant's ability to tolerate coastal conditions will depend upon where it is planted. Even highly salt tolerant plants cannot take a constant barrage of wind, ocean spray, and hot sun and still look good. As with any specific planting questions, consult your local Clemson Extension agent.

Charleston County, SC

PROJECT IMPACT

Building a Disaster-Resistant Community

Resources

CLEMSON EXTENSION SERVICE

Charleston County Office

259 Meeting Street

Charleston, SC 29401

Telephone: (843) 722-5940

S.C. FORESTRY COMMISSION

Charleston County Office

2880 Savannah Highway

Charleston, SC 29414

Telephone: (843) 556-3371

SCDHEC-OCRM

1362 McMillan Ave., Suite 400

Charleston, SC 29405

Telephone: (843) 744-5838

For more information on

PROJECT IMPACT,

call (843) 745-2380

Hazard Resistant

LANDSCAPING

While there are no magic solutions in landscaping that will totally protect your home or property from fire, flooding, high winds, or hurricanes, there are several ways in which the homeowner can increase the chance that their home will survive.

Much of the damage suffered through two major hurricanes (Hugo in 1989, and Andrew in 1992) was compounded by rapid urbanization and unsound landscaping procedures.

Plant recommendations are intentionally minimal. Charleston has a variety of terrain. What will grow well in one area, may not in another. Contact your local Clemson Extension agent for specific recommendations for your area.

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