

What makes flora highly flammable?

- Dry and dead leaves, twigs, branches
- Abundant, dense foliage
- Needles
- Low moisture foliage
- Peeling, loose bark
- Gummy sap
- Leathery or aromatic leaves
- Content of terpene, oils, or resin
- Dry uncut grasses

What makes flora reasonably fire-resistant?

- Hardy, slow-growing plants that don't produce litter or thatch.
- Drought tolerant natives with internal high water content. Generally, but not always, California natives are more tolerant of fire and deer.
- Trees with thick bark that restrict the growth of invasive shrub species and hardwood trees such as walnut, cherry, maple and poplar are less flammable. Deciduous trees and shrubs are more fire resistant because they have higher moisture content when in leaf, lower fuel volume when dormant, and usually do not contain flammable oils.
- Supple, moist leaves with little to no sap or resin residue.
- Low growing ground covers.
- Bulbs with dried leaves cut to the ground.

What can you do now to create a more fire-resistant landscape?

- Include pavers, bricks, pavement, gravel, rocks, dry creek beds, fountains, ponds, pools and lawns.
- Select high moisture plants that grow close to the ground with a low sap and resin content.
- Plant the right plant in the correct location. Leave space between plants.
- Minimize the inclusion of evergreen trees within 30 feet of structures. Clear the understory. Keep trees 20 feet away from chimneys.
- Remove invasive species or swaths of flammable plants including ivy, rosemary, broom, coyote brush, chamise, and juniper.
- Keep mulch moist. Create zones of rock, brick or gravel. Bark and leaves are not mulches recommended near structures.
- Prune trees 6-10 feet above the ground to hinder fire laddering.
- Keep appropriate clearance to reduce the threat of burning embers from decorative features such as gazebos, fences, sheds, porches and junk areas.
- Irrigate and maintain all flora, lawns, and hillsides. Clover, ground covers, and grasses that are kept low and green are excellent alternatives.
- Due to soil erosion, bare ground is not recommended.

Helpful Websites

- National Fire Protection Association: <https://www.nfpa.org>
- Moraga-Orinda Fire District: <http://www.mofd.org>
- University of California Cooperative Extension: https://ucanr.edu/sites/fire/Prepare/Landscaping/Plant_choice/
- Fire Safe Marin: <https://www.firesafemarin.org>
- Pacific Northwest Fire Resistant Plants: <http://www.firefree.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Fire-Resistant-Plants.pdf>
- Las Pilitas Nursery (Located in Santa Margarita, this website lists deer and fire-resistant flora plus burn times.) <https://www.laspilitas.com/easy/deerfire.htm>



Beautiful and fire-safe New Guinea impatiens.



The flower of coyote brush is fragrant with seeds that scatter to grow multiple plants.

Photos Cynthia Brian