

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 15 Issue 7 Wednesday, May 26, 2021



Lamorinda Home Sales

... read on Page D2

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Wildfire protection through landscaping



Photo Cynthia Brian

Drought-resistant Pride of Madeira grows well on hillsides but is considered flammable.

By Cynthia Brian

"Fire is never a gentle master."~ Proverb

This past year most of our conversations have revolved around the pandemic, mask wearing, and questions about recovery and normalcy. With the impending drought, an urgent topic that is on the minds of Californians is the potential for wildfires. With increasing climate changes and the trend of global warming, it is not a matter of if we'll be faced with fires, it is when.

We can do our part to protect our property as best as possible through firescaping, a landscape design that reduces house and property vulnerability to wildfire. While enhancing the



A river rock canal provides some protection near structures.

beauty of the property and creating a defensible space, we surround the house with plants that are less likely to ignite. Fires respect no boundaries and fires don't honor property lines. With enough heat, almost everything burns.

Our neck of the woods is rural and wooded. We have minimal escape routes and must be extra vigilant. Many of the plants and trees growing throughout our area are highly flammable including pines, cypress, cedar, fir, bamboo, acacia, juniper, Pampas grass, rosemary, ivy, arborvitae, miscanthus, and eucalyptus. Coyote brush, although moderately fire-resistant when it is young and green, is highly combustible as it grows. It depends on fires to regenerate and

grows everywhere in our hills. These plants need to be removed or carefully supervised. Since heat moves up, fire speed and severity are stronger on slopes where vegetation management is crucial.

A defensible space is an area around a structure that has been cleared of ignitable debris and botanicals that may cause a public safety hazard. A watered, green lawn can be considered a defensible space. A large brick, stone, or gravel area could be part of a defensible space.

No plant is fireproof.

Under the right conditions, every plant will burn, especially those that are drought-stressed or not maintained. Pruning of all plants makes them less flammable. A "fire-safe" plant means that it tends not to be a significant fuel source with a chemical composition that resists heat and combustion. It is critical to keep plants around our homes well-tended and pruned as a fire protection tool. The closer plants are to the house, the more care is needed.

Every homeowner is responsible for managing their vegetation to meet fire district requirements. For Moraga-Orinda Fire District requirements, combustible materials must be two feet away from a structure and plantings no taller than two feet high. Low-growing ground coverings and green grass are suitable as well as river rock, gravel, or crushed granite. Trees that are within six feet of the structure need to be removed, specifically eucalyptus, pine, bamboo, and junipers.

Neighborhoods are encouraged to form a committee to receive advice from local fire professionals on how to be Firewise. Being Firewise is dependent on the diligence of everyone in a neighborhood to keep a property fire safe. All properties become indefensible when one neighbor has overgrown bushes, brush, or low hanging trees. Neighbors must protect neighbors by making certain their properties are maintained. Again, fires do not honor property lines. ... continued on Page D12