



Over the Garden Fence

(Fire Gardening)



By Brian David (U.C. Master Gardener, Mariposa)

Fire Ecologist for University of California And Natural Resources (UCANR), Mark D. Garrett, says, “it is vital for business and homeowners to be proactive in protecting their properties from fire damage.” Our professional fire fighters are in disaster response mode. Fast burning massive fires are in California’s future.

Mark explained, California’s ecology involves recurring wildfires, but contemporary wildfires are increasing in intensity and scope. “We are working to reverse a century of fire and forestry mismanagement.” California’s forests remain littered with dry brush and dead trees, both standing and fallen.

Cal Fire proactively implements controlled burns in high risk areas, but fire professionals cannot keep up with the need for controlled burns. Therefore, expected wildfires make a property owner’s fire preparedness urgent.

Mark said, “water is still a great element for firefighting and is effective at preventing residential and commercial fire damage. Installing a sprinkler system on your roof can extinguish landing embers, (in northern California’s recent Carr Fire, hot embers blew over two miles). Having an automated landscape watering system may preserve your plants. A thirty-foot wet line buffer surrounding your home is good fire prevention strategy. Automated watering systems free up time for other emergency evacuation procedures.”

Roses are the a good choice for fire resistant plants near structures. Climbing ivy or other similar climbing plants can cause problems because of drying out or being so moist they cause wood rot; rotted wood ignites and burns fast. But it is best to have the border touching your

house plant-free and lined with non-flammable material, like rock. Growth near a structure should be kept very green through the fire season.

You can reduce water and electricity use by having a water catchment system in place. Using gray-water and xeriscape will also help prevent burning. It is essential to keep dry grass cut low as dried grasses are fire flash points.

Supporting structures below a deck should be screened. Below deck ground cover should be rock or non-flammable material. Eliminate all dried grass or dead leaves near a deck. For more tips on fire mitigation and prevention visit: cemariposa.ucanr.edu/fire_information.

UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County are located at 5009 Fairgrounds Rd., Mariposa. For more gardening and event information, visit our website (http://cemariposa.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardener/) and Facebook page (UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County). UC Master Gardeners staff a Helpline serving Mariposa County, including Greeley Hill, Coulterville, and Lake Don Pedro (209-966-7078 or mgmariposa@ucdavis.edu). Listen to us on the radio at KRYZ 98.5 FM on Wednesdays at 2 pm and Saturdays at 5 pm.