



BIGHORN BASIN FIRESMART



BIGHORN BASIN FIREWISE COMMUNITIES

Winters Here, What Do I Do Now?

With winter comes cold temperatures and snow, sometimes lots of it. This snow and cold often make working on your property difficult, if not impossible. So what can you do on those cold winter days to continue with the Firewise message and principles?

Winter is a great time for planning; use this time to help formulate ideas that could make your property and community less susceptible to fire. Make contact with your neighbors and ask them how there fuel reduction projects are coming along. Brainstorm some

ideas that, in a perfect world, could make your home and community safe, you never know when these ideas will become a reality.

Winter is also a time to check your communication links. Change the batteries in your smoke alarms and NOAA weather radios, these steps may save your life. Make contact with your homeowners association or local emergency organization and ensure that your address and contact information are current. This keeps emergency responders and dispatchers from searching for updated information during an incident

and may make the difference between saving your property and having your investment destroyed.

Just because the snow is falling and the temperatures are dropping does not mean that everything should stop. Even if you are located thousands of miles away you should not forget about the fire danger that your Wyoming property is in. This is time that can be utilized. Take some notes, jot some ideas down, contact your neighbors, and update your information, these are easy to do and can be done anywhere, anytime.



Thanks to Fremont County's FOOTHILLS OBSERVER for the above.

Firesmart information and all newsletter issues are available at:
www.bighornbasinfiresmart.com

In this issue

Page

Special points of interest

Winter's Here. What Do I Do Now?	1	* To get ready for next year
Firewise/Firesmart Coordinators	2	* Wyoming weather forecast website
Fall tree planting	3	* What, where, and how
Wyoming Forest Stewardship Plans	5	* How to get one for your forest
Treating Sagebrush	6	* Fire and mechanical means
Firesmart Project Before & After	7	* Worland and vicinity
Little Things That Matter	8	* Around your home or cabin

FALL TREE PLANTING

According to the Arbor Day Foundation, fall is the best time to plant trees, as fall moisture helps them establish root systems that will let them better withstand heat and drought in the coming summer.

Fall planting guidelines:

Trees can be planted until the ground is frozen solid. In Wyoming that date depends on where you live. To make the job easier, dig your planting holes before the trees arrive, temporarily storing the soil in a protected location until the trees arrive.

If your trees come with a cloth wrap around the roots, be sure and cut several slits in the covering when you get the tree in the hole, but before you carefully fill the hole with dirt.

Temporarily planting your new trees in buckets or pots for later planting is not recommended, as it restricts the oxygen to the roots, and can also freeze and crack the soil.

Mulch and water the new trees, even if it is cold out. Mulching fall planting is important as it insulates the soil from repeated freezing and thaws during the tree's first winter.

General tree planting cautions:

When planning for tree planting around your home or cabin look up, to **avoid planting trees under or near overhead utility lines**. Your six-foot sapling might be one that grows to be sixty feet (or more!) tall, with a twenty-five foot wide crown spread.

Estimate the crown spread of the fully-grown tree, and don't plant where the limbs would be over your house roof, or be close to the outside walls when the trees are fully grown. Either could cause problems with keeping your home or other structure Firesmart in the future.

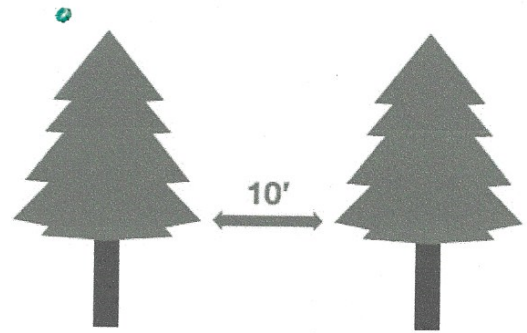
Tree and shrub plantings around your home or cabin should be from the list considered Firewise/Firesmart. Firesmart #33 (https://www.bighornbasinfiresmart.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/No.33_FiresmartNL_2019_Fall.pdf) has an extensive list for those trees/shrubs suitable for growing in Wyoming. Don't plant any flammable

trees or shrubs within the 30-foot Zone 2 from any building. Conifers, bitterbrush, sagebrush, and rabbitbrush are considered flammable. Use the chart on this page for spacing these plantings outside the 30-foot zone, but within 100 feet of all structures. ***It is also advised to not plant any Russian olive or tamarisk that are nuisance species on the Wyoming list.***

FLAMMABLE TREE & SHRUB MINIMUM SPACING GUIDELINE BASICS



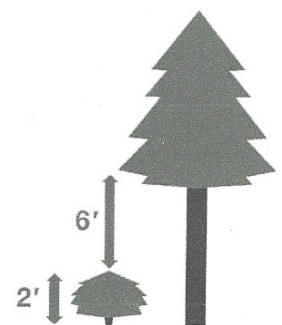
Shrubs on the prohibited flammable plant list must be spaced 2x the height of the shrub at maturity.



Trees on the prohibited flammable plant list must have at least 10 foot spacing between canopies.

Minimum Vertical Clearance

3 x the height of
the shrub to the
lowest branches
of the tree



Wyoming Forest Stewardship Plans

The Wyoming Forest Stewardship program is part of a nationwide effort developed by the National Association of State Foresters in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service. A Forest Stewardship Plan applies resource management principles to private forest lands that will benefit current and future landowners and society at large.



If you are interested in a Stewardship Plan and own two or more acres of forest land, you can obtain Forest Stewardship assistance from the Wyoming State Forestry Division. One of the District Foresters will help you to write a Forest Management Plan for your forest's future based on your personal Stewardship goals for the land.

The District Forester will go with you on a tour of your forest land. He will discuss various methods you could use to accomplish your goals for the land. And, he will provide information about the cost-share incentives to private landowners which will help them to accomplish the various practices which are included in a Forest Stewardship Plan.

Cost-Share Agreement

The Wyoming State Forestry Division is administering a grant program through your County's Protection District's Cooperative Wildland Fire Management Program (Firewise/Firesmart) that provides cost-share funding to create defensible space and reduce fuel loads on private lands. Participants will be entitled to funds for practices including:

- **Defensible Space:** thinning, pruning and fuels removal in a circular area not less than 90 feet from the exterior of the residence.
- **Fuel Treatment:** thinning and pruning areas other than the defensible space. Spacing of leave trees shall follow the recommendations of the plan. All green or dead fuel larger than 3 inches in diameter will be removed from the site. Slash shall be lopped to 12 inches in height or less, or chipped.
- **Fuel Breaks:** the exterior boundary and both sides of the roads within fuel treatment areas shall have all slash removed from the site, or chipped.
- **Slash Treatment:** treat logging or thinning slash from a pre-existing sale or thinning by: lop and scatter not to exceed 12 inches in height, or pile and burn, remove, or chip.

The cost-share agreement is designed to assist landowners with the costs of implementing recommended fuels reduction activities. The costs of completing the activities are turned into the Firewise Coordinator, and up to 65% (50% for Firesmart-related treatments) of the total cost of the activity will then be paid to the landowner. The program allows homeowners to do the work themselves and charge an hourly rate for in-kind services or to hire a private contractor to accomplish the tasks outlined in the Stewardship Agreement.

For further information, contact State Forestry at (307) 856-8655.

Sagebrush can be Treated



Sagebrush thrives on dry, harsh sites.

"The masticating head acts like a lawn mower cutting the sagebrush into chips that can be left on site to decompose"

Wyoming's sage brush seems to grow just about anywhere. And it grows tall. This sage brush also burns extremely hot during fires and can have amazingly high flame lengths. It is also a stubborn and hearty plant that seems impossible to remove.

One of the best ways to rid your property of this volatile plant is to burn it. Prescribed fire is a great tool to lower the density of the sage brush on your property. Not only does it kill the sagebrush itself, but it also disposes of the remaining fuel without having to haul it off site. This comes with a price though. Just ask the USFS and the people of Homestead Park what the risks are from a prescribed fire on a sagebrush covered hillside.

One safe option is mechanized removal or cutting of the sagebrush. This

can be done in numerous ways. The first of which would be to cut the individual plants down using a chain saw or some other sort of cutting device. The slash that is accumulated would then need to be disposed of either by burning or by removing it from the site. This method is slow and labor intensive.

A preferred option would be to have a contractor use a small skid steer or similar machine with a masticating head cutting device. These machines are very mobile and can operate on most sagebrush landscapes. The masticating head acts like a lawn mower cutting the sagebrush into chips that can be left on site to decompose. This method is fast and relatively cheap when compared to the other methods. Another added benefit of this is that because the machinery is relatively lightweight and often run on tracks, they create minimal disturbance to the underlying soil. This helps lower the potential that invasive species will take over the

site.

Sagebrush does have a lot of benefits including, but not limited to, wildlife hiding cover, big game food source, and it keeps the ecosystem in a steady state. Because it is the climax species, once it becomes established it is very seldom out-competed by any other species of plants. This is good because the invasive species generally cannot take over the area, but it also limits the ability of native grasses to succeed.

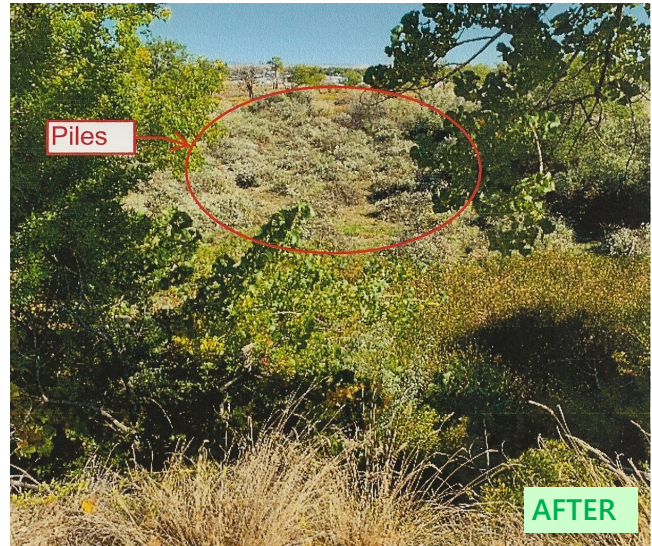
Due to the low moisture, if your property contains sagebrush, you may want to look into doing some mechanical treatments to lower the fire danger. Not only does sagebrush removal lower the fire danger, but it also greatly improves the grasses and forbs on most properties. To find a contractor and to see if Firewise can pay for some of the costs, please call **307-272-9533 for more information**



Skid Steer with brush mowing attachment.

CORRECTION: Page 7 of Firesmart #43 was mistakenly identified as BEFORE and AFTER-photos of a completed Firesmart project along the Big Horn Canal. The page was actually of a project at the MillerCoors Plant along the Bighorn River.

Here are some BEFORE and AFTER photos of a fuels reduction and Russian olive removal Firesmart project along the Bighorn River within Worland.



And some BEFORE and AFTER photos of a fuels reduction and Russian olive removal Firesmart project near the Worland sewage lagoons.



More Firesmart projects are going on in the Bighorn Mountains, and along the Bighorn River. Photos will be in future newsletters.



FOLLOW-UP TO THE PRESCRIBED BURNING OVERVIEW IN FIRESMART #39:

Past prescribed burning in the west has modified fire behavior and after-effects on numerous recent wildfire events in forest settings, as recognized by resource specialists and tribal landowners. The intentional burning generally didn't seem to be reducing the size of larger fires, but definitely changed the results when compared to portions of the same fires that had not been previously prescribed burned.

Since the purpose of most intentional forestland burning is to reduce fuel loadings and duplicate the low intensity fire effects that occurred in historic natural fires in many forest types, the wildfires passing through these old burned blocks left a more or less survivable forest, often in the middle of the large area deforested by the surrounding wildfire.

This is anticipated to become more "normal" as forest managers increase the application of prescribed fire, and have been increasing the size of intentionally burned blocks.

SPECIAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY WASHAKIE FIRESMART

Wildfire Mitigation Plan: If you would like a Wildfire Mitigation Plan for your home or cabin, you can request one from the Washakie County Firesmart Coordinator mentioned on Page 2, or submit an application through <https://www.bighornbasinfiresmart.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Firesmart-WMP-application-fillable.pdf>

Pile Burning: If your Washakie County home or cabin has slash and debris piles resulting from your Firesmart activities with an approved Wildfire Mitigation Plan, your county Firesmart coordinator is available to burn them at no cost to you, weather permitting.

Home and cabin owners with piles to burn need to be reminded that:

- Flame lengths may be 10 to 15 times the height and length of the pile size. Example: If a pile is five feet tall and five feet wide, the flames could extend in all directions 50 feet or more, depending on wind. With this in mind, piles should be far enough away to avoid scorching standing trees, structures or other improvements. The photo shows potential flame lengths.
- After ignition, piles will need to be closely monitored periodically for the next few days, to ensure that fire does not spread away from the pile location.
- Debris piles should be compacted with as little air space as possible.



If you are burning your own piles, contact the County Fire Warden to inform them of the time and day you will be burning. The Washakie County Fire Warden phone number is: **(307) 347-6379**. Other county fire warden numbers are on Page 2.

Home and cabin owners should consider spreading a seed mixture on burn pile locations the following spring with native grasses and forbs to help prevent introduction of noxious weeds

To obtain burning services, make a request to Washakie County Firesmart at firesmart@wytfs.com, 6628 W. Riverside Dr. Casper, Wyoming 82604, or **(307) 272-9533 (mobile)**. Your request should include your name and the location/physical address of your home or cabin.

LITTLE THINGS THAT MATTER



Dry needle buildup under the decorative juniper/cedar in your Home Ignition Zone. Needle removal and some pruning are needed to be Firesmart.. If this tree/shrub is within ten feet of any structure, it should be removed.



Unscreened attic vent. Should be filled with 1/8-inch metal screen to prevent entry by embers.



Trees and shrubbery against and on top of two buildings. Should be trimmed back to 8 or 10 feet away from the building walls and roof to clean the Home Ignition Zone. Since this tree is a Russian olive, the whole tree could be removed.



Forest litter and needles on a structure's roof. Keep roofs clear of forest litter.



Bird houses under the eaves of cabin wall. Removal during fire season is a must.

These have been mentioned in earlier newsletters. You need to remember them when doing your regular walk-around Firesmart inspections.

All previous issues of Bighorn Basin Firesmart can be found at:
<https://www.bighornbasinfiresmart.com/about/firesmart-newsletters>.