

# LEAN, CLEAN AND GREEN

To make a defensible space, an area of 20m from the walls of your house should be:

- Lean - minimal amounts of flammable vegetation
- Clean - no dead vegetation or other flammable debris, and
- Green – plants are healthy and green during the fire season

## The Lean, Clean and Green Checklist

- use low growing herbaceous (non-woody) plants that keep green during the fire season. Herbaceous plants include lawn, clover, ground covers, bedding plants, bulbs, perennial flowers and conservation grasses. Irrigate regularly.
- use mulches, rock and non-combustible hard surfaces (concrete paths, brick patios and asphalt driveways).
- deciduous ornamental trees and shrubs are OK if they are kept green and free of dead plant material.
- minimise the use of ornamental coniferous shrubs and trees (and tall grasses such as toi toi and pampas).

On farms, or other larger properties have additional water supplies (streams, feeding troughs etc). That are easily located and accessible.



Karaka



Five Finger



Pittosporum

## Fire-resistant plants for fire-prone areas

### Buffer zone plants

The following plants have relatively low flammability. They can be used to create a buffer zone between scrubland and your house.

### Native Plants

Carpodetus serratus (*Putaputaweta*)  
 Coprosma australis (*Rawekau/Kanono*)  
 Coprosma grandifolia (*Kanono*)  
 Coprosma repens (*Taupata*)  
 Coprosma robusta (*Karamu*)  
 Corynocarpus laevigatus (*Karaka*)  
 Fuchsia excorticata (*Kotukutuku, Tree Fuchsia*)  
 Geniostoma liguistifolium (*Hangehange*)  
 Griselinia littoralis (*Papauma/Broadleaf*)  
 Griselinia lucida (*Puka*)  
 Macropiper excelsum (*Kawakawa/Peppertree*)  
 Pittosporum crassifolium (*Karo*)  
 Pseudopanax arboreus (*Five Finger*)  
 Solanum aviculare (*Poroporo*)

### Exotic Plants

Agapanthus orientalis (*agapanthus*)

*Most nurseries stock these plants. Check your local supplier for details.*

## Fire Permits

In the Wellington region a fire permit is required for lighting any fire in the open (e.g. incinerator, garden waste). Permits can be obtained from your local territorial authority:

- |                                 |          |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| • Hutt City Council             | 570 6666 |
| • Kapiti Coast District Council | 904-5700 |
| • Porirua City Council          | 237 5089 |
| • Upper Hutt City Council       | 527-2169 |
| • Wellington City Council       | 499 4444 |

Those who do not have a fire permit are liable for any costs involved in extinguishing the fire. If you light a fire you might be liable for any cost in extinguishing the fire if it gets out of control.

## More Information

If you would like to know more about vegetation fires, protecting your property or the current fire ban status we recommend the following sites

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| National Rural Fire Authority          | <a href="http://www.nrfa.fire.org.nz">www.nrfa.fire.org.nz</a>                           |
| Wellington City Rural Fire Force       | <a href="http://www.werff.org.nz">www.werff.org.nz</a>                                   |
| New Zealand Fire Service               | <a href="http://www.fire.org.nz">www.fire.org.nz</a>                                     |
| Wellington Emergency Management Office | <a href="http://www.wemo.wcc.govt.nz">www.wemo.wcc.govt.nz</a>                           |
| Wellington City Council                | <a href="http://www.wcc.govt.nz">www.wcc.govt.nz</a>                                     |
| Porirua City Council                   | <a href="http://www.pcc.govt.nz">www.pcc.govt.nz</a>                                     |
| Kapiti Coast District Council          | <a href="http://www.kcdc.govt.nz">www.kcdc.govt.nz</a>                                   |
| Hutt City Council                      | <a href="http://www.huttcity.govt.nz/services/emo">www.huttcity.govt.nz/services/emo</a> |
| Wainui Bush Fire Force                 | <a href="http://www.wainuifire.org.nz">www.wainuifire.org.nz</a>                         |
| Upper Hutt City Council                | <a href="http://www.uhcc.govt.nz">www.uhcc.govt.nz</a>                                   |
| Upper Hutt Rural Fire Force            | <a href="http://www.uhrff.tripod.com">www.uhrff.tripod.com</a>                           |

# SAVING YOUR HOME FROM SCRUB FIRES



**Does your home border on to land covered in gorse, grass, pine trees or other vegetation? If so, then this brochure is for you – it contains information that may help you save your property if fire breaks out on the neighbouring land.**

The Wellington region is dangerously dry – we suffered the worst drought on record over the summer of 2000-2001.

It may have rained and been cold over the winter – but moisture levels in both vegetation and topsoil have not recovered from the drought and are far lower than normal – meaning it's likely they will dry out again over the summer months.

Therefore the chance of fire in areas bordering urban properties this summer is extremely high.

The Wellington Region is particularly at risk from vegetation fires. Apart from the fact that we are surrounded by huge areas of gorse and regenerating bush, the region is also being planted in thousands of hectares of pine trees.

On top of that, the region has two characteristics that fuel big vegetation fires – steep hillsides and strong winds.

On the next three pages we aim to show you how some simple preventative actions can help save your home if its does end up threatened by a scrub fire.

Photo courtesy of Evening Post

# HOW TO DEFEND YOUR HOME AGAINST SCRUB FIRES

The best way to protect your home is to “starve” a vegetation fire as it approaches. That means removing as much flammable material as possible in a “defensible area” of up to 20 metres around your house. The defensible space will not only reduce the possibility of flames reaching your house – but it’ll also provide a safe space to allow firefighters the access to defend the property.



## HOW FAST CAN FIRE TRAVEL?

On a typical Wellington summer’s day, with a wind of 30kmh blowing, a scrub fire can burn at speeds that are alarming – and highly dangerous. Flames can leap roads and travel faster than a person can run, surrounding people trying to make their escape. The best advice is to evacuate well before the danger becomes imminent. Leave the fire fighting to the trained professionals.



## IF A FIRE IS HEADING YOUR WAY

- Make sure that all garden hoses are connected to taps and reach all areas of your property.
- Identify at least two suitable exit routes from your neighbourhood.
- Have valuable personal documents, papers and mementoes within easy reach – so you can take them to safety.
- Make sure all family members are aware of a prearranged meeting place.
- Close all doors and windows.
- Leave exterior doors unlocked – this will help firefighters to gain easy access to your house (if they need to enter to fight a fire).
- Leave a light on in each room.
- Remove curtains and other combustible materials from around windows.
- Follow instructions of emergency personnel.
- Tune into the local radio station.



**You don’t want this to happen to your house!**

### Key:

1. Make sure your property is easily identified from the road. Use the rural numbering system if you are in a rural area
2. Only use approved incinerators and obtain a fire permit before burning anything
3. Consider establishing a static water supply that can be accessed by fire fighters
4. Leave hoses connected to the taps
5. Don't leave toys and flammable furnishings outdoors
6. Where possible allow for emergency vehicle access to your driveway ensuring no overhanging obstructions
7. Have an evacuation plan and be prepared to leave by vehicle if instructed
8. Check woodpiles are stacked away from the house
9. Remove dead branches hanging over your roof and any branches within 4.5 metres of your chimney
10. Clear all dead leaves and other materials from your roof and gutters
11. Use fire resistant plants
12. Widely space your shrubs
13. Cover chimney outlet with non-flammable screen of 4cm or smaller mesh
14. Keep lawns well maintained
15. Use fire resistant building materials in new construction
16. Own at least one fire extinguisher and learn how to use it
17. If asked to evacuate, leave the lights on
18. Remove all stacks of debris from your garden
19. Clear flammable vegetation away from roads and driveways
20. Residents around the town belt are equally at risk from vegetation fires as people living in rural areas. Take precautions to protect your home
21. Hot embers can travel a great distance
22. Always have stored water
23. Have personal documents and photographs within easy reach
24. Keep an eye on children
25. Have an alternate water supply