

Principle 5: Wildlife Friendly Living

One of the joys of living here is seeing bobcats, otters, birds, and other wildlife. Your choices can greatly increase the wildlife use of your property.

Consider removing fences, or installing fences that allow animals to travel for foraging, finding water, or fleeing predators. Open travel corridors make for healthier animals and a stronger gene pool. Think about the purpose your fence needs to accomplish, and choose a wildlife-friendly structure to accomplish it. For example, to mark a property boundary, bollards or posts may be sufficient. Avoid barbed wire or razor wire. Keep the lowest horizontal element 18" off the ground. Remember to avoid flammable materials close to buildings. If you must exclude wildlife from gardens or other areas, fence closely around those areas. More guidance at <https://tinyurl.com/ybqzjsb>. For fawn-safe iron gates, see <https://tinyurl.com/fawnsv>.

Minimize night lighting, point it downward, keep it low to the ground, and illuminate only the minimum area necessary.

Pets can push wildlife away. For wild animals' sake:

- Consider making your cat an inside cat.
- Restrict how much of the property your pets have access to.
- Do not put pet food outside.

Don't use toxic pesticides; they will enter the food chain. Do not feed wildlife.



Sonoma Ecology Center can help!

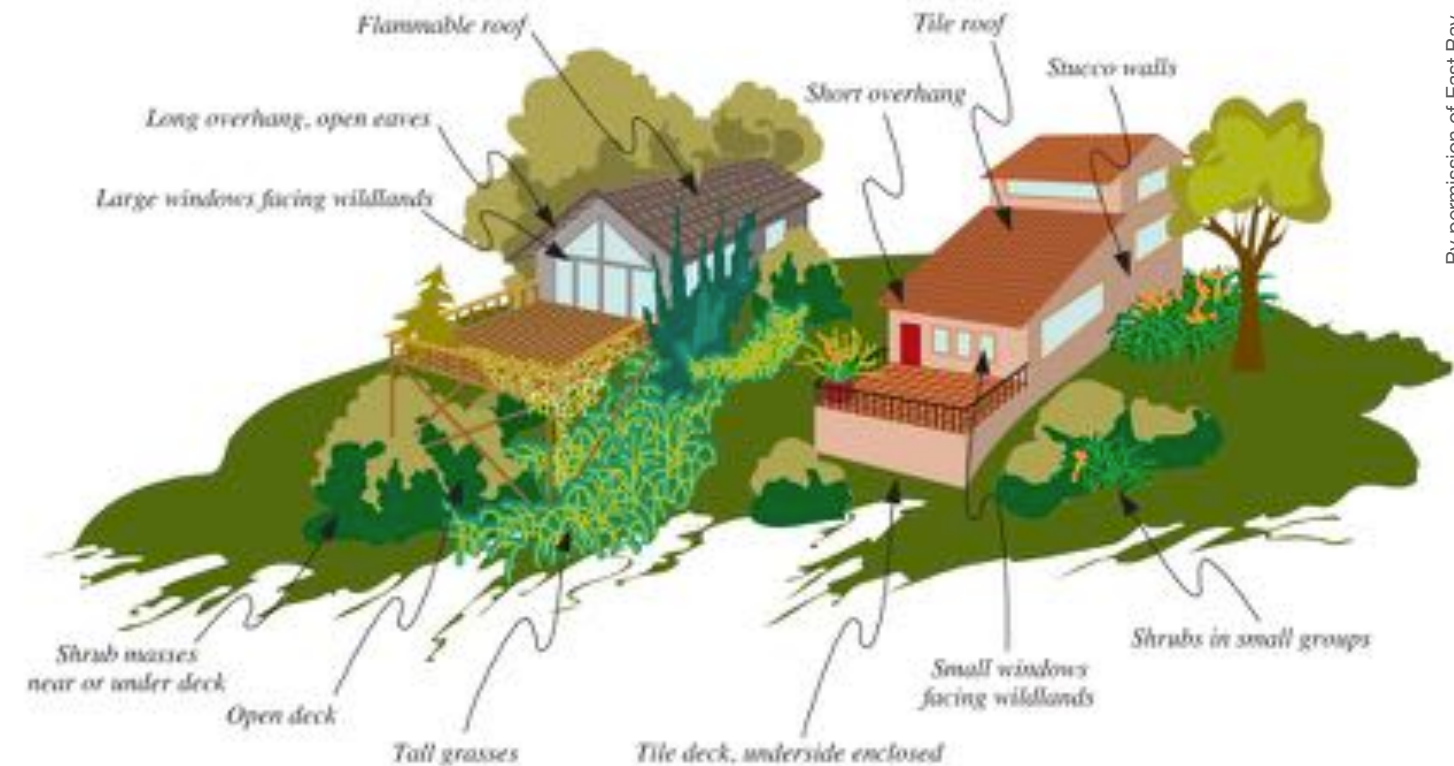
Our professional staff can assist with erosion, drainage, landscape design, invasive weeds, reforestation, and land management decision-making. Onsite consultations for a modest fee can be refunded with a contract for further services. Contact us at info@sonomaecologycenter.org or (707) 996-0712 x116.

For more information from Sonoma Ecology Center, including a digital version of this pamphlet with live links, see www.sonomaecologycenter.org/fire-recovery/.

Fire Smart, Water Wise, and Wildlife Friendly Re-Imagine Your Landscape

Your rural property can be all of the above... beautiful, resilient, defensible, and thriving. Let the principles and resources in this pamphlet guide your approach, so you can put ALL your values into action on your property.

This pamphlet uses short "tinyurl's" to point to the most useful of many online resources.



By permission of East Bay Municipal Utility District.

Principle 1: To Protect Your Home, Start with Your Home

California is a fire-prone place. We Californians can become as adapted to fire as our beautiful native landscapes are. Here's how:

#1: Homes next to wildlands are at greatest risk of burning. The most effective way to prevent your home from burning in a wildfire is to avoid living in wildlands, on a steep slope, or near east-west canyons that carry occasional very strong winds.

#2: Almost all homes lost to California wildfires are ignited by embers, not flames, often when embers enter the house through vents. Home design, construction, and maintenance are critical for repelling embers and resisting flames. This insurance industry graphic shows what to do: <https://tinyurl.com/ydaj9fy8>. Construction standards are at <https://tinyurl.com/yaebel4y>.

#3: Managing the area immediately around your house, out to about 30 feet, is the next most important safety task. Wood decks, firewood piles, wood fences, vegetation and lumber under decks and along foundations are common points of ignition.

#4: Lightly managing vegetation beyond about 30 feet can reduce losses during some wildfires. Removing vegetation beyond 100 feet can increase the risk of loss during a fire, by encouraging flammable weeds and allowing the free flow of embers. Shade from trees is critical for minimizing growth of short-lived grasses. Read more at <https://tinyurl.com/pbnguq> and about firewise landscaping at <https://tinyurl.com/y8dvu2pu>.

Principle 2: Rely on Native, Long-Lived, Low-Water-Use Plants

Your plantings can provide beauty and great wildlife viewing opportunities, reduce the risk of fire losses, and save precious water for our creeks and aquifers.

Build your garden for birds, bees, and butterflies. Defensible space should not be barren.

- Plant natives that provide food for wildlife and stay green in the dry, hot months. Drought-adapted plants retain more water in their leaves and stems in hot dry weather, and are less flammable during fire season.
- Cluster plantings of species that support butterflies or birds, with paths or cleared areas between plant clusters.
- Remove dead plant material in the dry season, particularly grasses and weeds.
- Prune branches so they do not come closer than about 10 feet to buildings.
- Retain and plant trees. Trees provide great beauty, as well as ecosystem services such as shade, clean air, and soil retention. Shade from trees reduces weedy growth that can become flammable, and reduces mowing and maintenance.

To avoid over-use of water, follow these tips:

- Group plants together by their water requirements.
- Only plant lawn where you really use it.
- Larger plants can be watered less frequently but deeply.

These landscape design templates can help with overall design: <https://tinyurl.com/ycozqgkn>. Use CalScape, calscape.org, to match native plant species to specific landscaping needs. An in-depth fire recovery guide from the California Native Plant Society is at <https://tinyurl.com/y967ud28>. Helpful info for drier locations such as chaparral is at <http://www.laspilatas.com/fire.htm>.

Richard Dale, Sonoma Ecology Center



Principle 3: Water... Slow It, Spread It, Sink It!

In our climate, we need to sink water into the soil when it rains, and only use what we need, leaving more water for wildlife, healthy plants, creeks and wetlands.

Maintain and install features that slow rainwater and encourage water to sink into the soil. Minimize impermeable or paved surfaces. Divert downspouts into the landscape. Retain low spots that allow water to sink in. Install swales or vegetated basins to infiltrate water. Many more ideas are at <https://tinyurl.com/js2bh35> and <https://tinyurl.com/y78mh4yg>.

Consider using rainwater or graywater for irrigation. Avoid diverting water from streams during summer or fall. More at <https://www.sonomaecologycenter.org/streamflow/>.

Optimize irrigation. Water before 6am or after 8pm. Use drip irrigation. Adjust irrigation to the weather using <http://srcity.org/watersmartyard>. Maintain a mulch layer and incorporate organic matter into the soil to reduce the water lost to evaporation and increase the water holding capacity of the soil. More at <https://tinyurl.com/ycsj2d5s>.

Control erosion to build soil and avoid polluting waterways. Get help at <https://tinyurl.com/yanyo8qf> and <https://tinyurl.com/y967ud28>. A local map of post-fire landslide risk is at <https://tinyurl.com/socohazard>.

Principle 4: Respect Waterways

Where water collects and flows, valuable habitats develop. Whether they are called creeks, streams, gullies, or drainages, they need protection.

Areas around waterways should not be disturbed. These lush areas filter runoff water, stabilize soils, and keep water clean and cool, helping fish, beaver, and other wildlife. Streamside areas are corridors for wild animals to find food, water, and mates.

Flood risk increases for several years after fires. Be prepared and alert during storms.

It is illegal to remove plants, deposit debris, or move soil in or near streams, even those that only have water temporarily, or within the corridor (usually 100 feet), without a permit from the county, the state, or both. Sonoma County's rules are at <https://tinyurl.com/ybglxgxb>. The state's are at <https://tinyurl.com/ybqqzjsb>.

Richard Dale, Sonoma Ecology Center



About burned or damaged trees

Dead or damaged trees provide essential services to our forests and woodlands. A standing dead tree or fallen log can provide habitat for more organisms than a living tree. Bluebirds, owls, woodpeckers, and birds of prey all require or prefer dead trees for parts of their life cycle.

Within your defensible space, approximately 30-100 feet around a home, living trees should not be removed unless

they are deemed a hazard. Dead branches and limbs should be removed to maintain tree health and reduce flammability.

Beyond 100 feet, leave dead or damaged trees in place to provide habitat for birds and other wildlife. Trees and logs, alive and dead, help to retain and enrich soils. Standing or fallen, they prevent erosion on slopes or near waterways.

A helpful guide to burned oaks is at <https://tinyurl.com/y8dву2pu>.