FIREWISE Garden Design

‘It’s a mistake to assume that having a desert around your house will make you safe.’

Lesley Corbett, Safer Gardens - Plant Flammability & Planning for Fire.

Radiant heat is the heat you feel when standing near a fire. It is the biggest risk to life in bushfires.

The best protection from radiant heat is distance and/or a fire-resistant physical barrier. Fire Wise trees and shrubs can be used as a barrier to radiant heat.

Ember attack is the most common way buildings catch alight.

As well as slowing local winds, Fire Wise trees and shrubs can deflect and trap embers that might otherwise ignite a building. Fire Wise ground covers such as succulents and salt bushes can be used (better than most grasses) to retain moisture, trap embers and slow down the rate of fire spread.

‘Areas that are open or have been fully cleared, allow embers to pass through freely without being obstructed, and can create strong winds at ground level.’

CSIRO’s Justin Leonard, testimony: Victorian Bushfire Royal Comission 2009

‘Correctly selected and located trees can reduce wind speed, absorb radiant heat, and filter embers’.

CFA, Landscaping for Bushfire www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Bass Coast Landcare Network

South Gippsland Landcare Network

Australian Government

Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife

Important: The list of plants in this guide was endorsed by experts in ecology and fire management. No plant is completely fireproof and can burn given extreme heat, particularly during extreme or catastrophic fire events. Always follow official advice and leave early if instructed.

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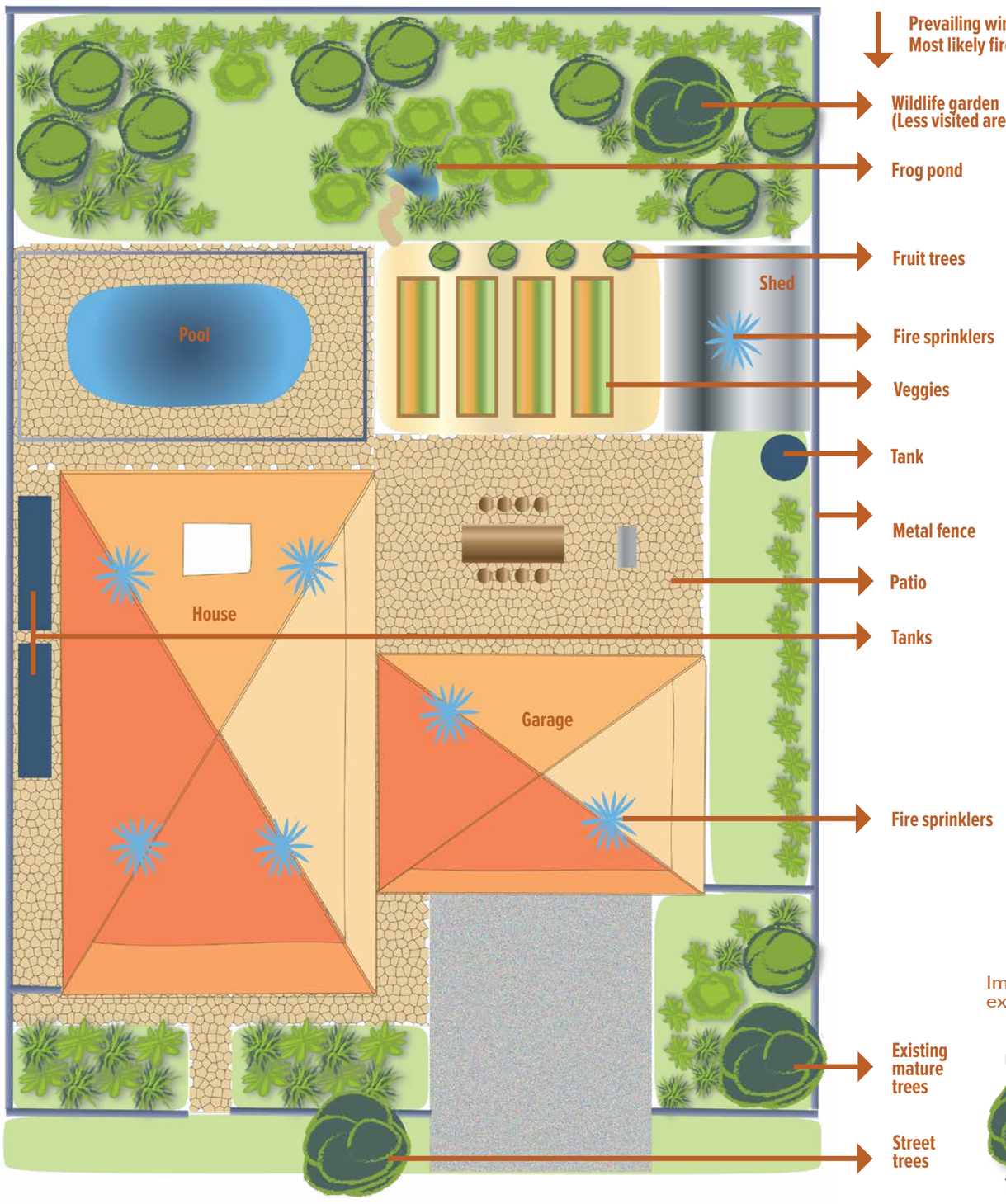

Fire Wise Landscaping

Principle 1 - Create defendable space near your house

- **Paths and driveways -** Use gravel, brick, concrete or non-combustibles.
- **Mulch -** Use crushed rock or pebbles, not straw or wood chips.
- **Pools, frog-bogs and ponds -** Locate between your house and likely fire front.
- **Fences -** Replace wooden or brush with metal or brick.
- **Earth banks and stone walls -** Can be used as Fire Wise landscape features.
- **Sprinkler systems and rainwater tanks -** Make installation a priority.

Fire Wise Garden Design

Principle 2 - Break up fuel continuity

- Create islands of vegetation, separate garden areas with mown lawn or succulent living mulches.
- Don't plant shrubs under trees

Existing mature trees:

- Trim tree canopies to prevent overlapping with one another.
- Groups of trees can remain together but separated from other groups in islands.
- Remove low branches from large trees to 2 m.

Fire-wise Maintenance

Principle 3 - Thoughtfully place, space and care for plants

- Choose Fire Wise plants.
- Near the house, only use low growing plants e.g. succulents and salt bushes.
- Prune branches that overhang the house e.g. from neighbours.
- Maintain the garden. Trim and remove dead material in fire season.
- Capture and direct rainwater. Keep lawns and gardens green in summer.

New trees:

- Space trees at least 1.5 x their mature height away from the house.
- Plant trees apart to allow at least 2 m between mature canopies.

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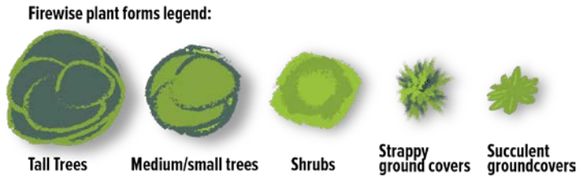

Garden biodiversity benefits

- Native plants require less inputs for healthy survival.
- They provide habitat, shelter and food for local wildlife.
- They contribute to improved biodiversity in urban and semi urban environments.
- They promote beneficial insects and reduce populations of pest invertebrates.

This guide is accompanied by a multimedia resource with further information at: www.basscoastlandcare.org.au/firewise.html

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Fire Wise native plants of Bass Coast and South Gippsland

Tall Trees

Acacia dealbata
Silver wattle 2-30 m
Acacia mearnsii
Black wattle 5-15 m
Acacia melanoxylon
Blackwood 6-30 m

Shrubs

Atriplex species
Salt bushes
Correa alba
White correa
Goodenia ovata
Hop goodenia
Indigofera australis
Austral indigo
Olearia lirata
Snowy daisy bush
Rhagodia candolleana
Sea berry salt bush
Solanum aviculare
Kangaroo apple
Viminaria juncea
Golden spray

Strappy ground covers

Bulbine bulbosa
Bulbine lily
Carex appressa
Tall sedge
Dianella tasmanica
Tasman flax-lily
Dianella revoluta
Black anther flax-lily
Ficinia nodosa
Nobby club rush
Juncus pallidus
Pale rush
Juncus procerus
Giant rush
Lomandra longifolia
Spiny mat rush
Pattersonia sp.
Purple flag

Medium/ small trees

Allocasuarina verticillata
Drooping sheoak 4-10 m
Banksia integrifolia
Coastal banksia 5-15 m
Banksia marginata
Silver banksia 1-12 m
Bursaria spinosa
Sweet bursaria 1-8 m
Lomatia fraseri
Tree lomatia 2-8 m
Myoporum insulare
Common boobialla 1-6 m
Myrsine howittiana
Muttonwood 3-10 m
Olearia argophylla
Musk daisy bush 3-10 m
Pomaderis aspera
Hazel pomaderris 3-8 m

Native Plant Nurseries

- BCLN Nursery - Bass
  0459 464 979
- Barb Martin Bushbank - Phillip Island
  0421 923 914
- Melaleuca Native Plant Nursery
  Inverloch - 0487 335 606
- Grand Ridge Nursery
  Grand Ridge - 0419 006 176
- Strzelecki Plant Farm
  Allambee South - 0428387 344
- Smoulders Nursery - Fish creek
  0438 609 285
- Wonthaggi Seed Bank
  Wonthaggi - 0402 210 020

Succulent groundcovers

Carprobrotus rossi
Karkalla
Dichondra repens
Kidney weed
Disphyma crassifolium
Rounded noon flower
Tetragonia implexicoma
Bower spinach
Viola hedearaceae
Native violet

Information sourced from and used with permission from Lakes Entrance Community Landcare Fire Wise brochures. Produced by the Bass Coast Landcare Nework 2025.
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Important: This information has been designed to assist you in your planning but it is only a guide. Bass Coast Landcare Network and South Gippsland Landcare Network do not guarantee that this publication is without flaw and recognises that the information contained may not be applicable in all situations. Therefore we do not accept any liability.

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