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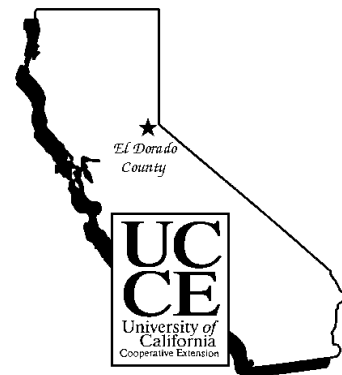
Fire Resistant Landscaping Plants

for the

Traverse Creek Watershed

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Flammable Plants (“Pyrophytes”)

Blade-leaf or needle leaf evergreens

Leaves are typically stiff, leathery, small or fine lacy

Leaves and wood usually contain volatile waxes, fats, terpenes, or oils

Typically aromatic (crushed leaves have strong odors)

Their sap is usually gummy, resinous and has a strong odor

Usually contain plentiful fine, twiggy, dry or dead materials

May have pubescent (hair covered) leaves

May have loose or papery bark

They are cured and dry

Grasses: Any dry grass

Herbs: Any cured herb

Shrub: Any shrub with excessive dead wood. Any over-mature, dying or dead brush.

Trees: Any over-dense forest, stand or urban forest planting when under stress or over-mature.

Water stressed plants that are in poor condition or more flammable

Plants that flame (not smolder) when preheated and ignited with a match

Fire-Resistant Plants

Most broad leaf deciduous trees

Leaves tend to be supple, moist and easily crushed

Trees tend to be clean, not bushy, and have little dead wood

Shrubs are low growing (<2 feet) with minimal dead material

Tall shrubs are clean, not bushy

Sap is water like and typically does not have a strong odor

Fire Resistant Landscaping List

While the species of plant selected is very important, the condition of the plant is just as important. Even some flammable (pyrophytic) species can be quite fire resistant with proper care. The difference is in the growth form and water status. Plants with open growth forms, no dead wood, and well watered are much less likely to burn.

Plant arrangement, spacing, and maintenance are as important as plant type when considering fire safety. Landscapes with plants arranged and spaced to prohibit large amounts of fuel from occurring in close proximity and adequately watered will greatly reduce the fire hazard.

The plants in this list were taken from a recent publication *Defensible Space Landscaping in the Urban/Wildland Interface: A compilation of fire performance ratings of residential landscape plants* recently completed by the University of California Forest Products Lab. This project included compiling the fire resistant status of a large number of landscape plants based upon a large number of studies and publications. This list contains those plant species which were identified by several sources as being fire resistant, and which are suited to the climate in the Traverse Creek Watershed.

Up to 12 inches tall

Achillea tomentosa var. Moonshine perennial groundcover	Woolly yarrow
Height 6 to 10 inches. Flat, spreading mat of fern-like hairy leaves. Flowers in summer. Shear off dead flowers. Good in sunny spot or partly shaded small areas. Little water once established. Drought tolerant. Useful for erosion control.	

Ajuga reptans perennial groundcover	Carpet bugle
Height to 6 inches. Spreads quickly to form a thick carpet of lustrous 2-3 inch wide leaves. Bears flowers from spring to early summer. Full sun or partial shade. Regular water needed.	

Armeria maritima evergreen groundcover	Thrift, Common thrift
Height 6-10 inches. Flower stalks with tufted mounds of 6 inch long leaves spreading to 1 foot across. Blooms almost all year. Full sun, little to moderate water. Drought tolerant.	

Fire Resistant Landscaping Plants for the Traverse Creek Watershed

Artemisia caucasica
evergreen shrub

Silver spreader

Height 3-6 inches, spreading to 2 feet wide. Silky foliage, small flowers. Needs good drainage. Takes extreme heat and cold well. Full sun, best with a little water. Drought tolerant.

Cerastium tomentosum
evergreen groundcover

Snow in summer

Height 6 to 8 inches, spreads 2 to 3 feet in one year. Low growing, spreading, dense, tufty mats of 3/4 inch leaves. Masses of flowers in early spring. Shear off faded flower clusters. May look shabby in cold winter, but revives rapidly in spring. Divide in fall or early spring. Full sun or part shade. Water often for fast growth. Suitable for erosion control.

Cotoneaster dammerii
evergreen groundcover

Bearberry cotoneaster

Height to 6 inches. Fast prostrate growth to 10 feet wide. Branches root along the ground. Leaves are glossy. Produces small fruit. Full sun, little or no water once established. Suitable for erosion control.

Duchesnea indica
perennial groundcover

Mock strawberry

Low to ground, with trailing stems that root firmly along the ground. Long stalked leaves. Flowers are followed by fruit that stands above foliage rather than under leaves (as in a true strawberry). Grows readily without much care. Can become rampant invader. Any exposure, little water required. Drought tolerant. Suitable for erosion control plantings.

Festuca rubra
perennial groundcover

Creeping red fescue

Lawn grass usually mowed to 2 inches tall. Fine blades, narrow and tends to grow clumpy. Unmowed, can make an attractive meadow. Full sun or partial shade, not much water compared to other grasses. Drought tolerant.

Fragaria chiloensis
evergreen groundcover

Wild strawberry

Height 6-12 inches. Forms low, compact, lush mats. Glossy leaves, large white flowers in spring, followed by red seedy fruits in fall. Needs annual mowing or cutting back in early spring to force new growth and prevent stem buildup. Sun or partial shade.

Fire Resistant Landscaping Plants for the Traverse Creek Watershed

Iberis sempervirens
evergreen groundcover

Evergreen candytuft
Edging candytuft

Height 8 to 10 inches or higher, spreading about as wide. Leaves narrow and shiny. Flower cluster on long stems early spring to June. Full sun, regular water.

Lonicera japonica 'Halliana'
evergreen groundcover

Hall's honeysuckle

Groundcover and sometimes vine that runs rampant if given the chance. Blooms show in late spring, summer. Can smother less vigorous plants if not kept in check. Partial or wholly deciduous in coldest regions. Sun or light shade. Best with moderate summer water. Drought tolerant.

Oenothera berlandieri
perennial groundcover

Mexican evening primrose

Height 10 to 12 inches. 1.5 inch blooms at stem tips. Profuse blooms during summer. Thrives with little or no care once established. Invasive if not controlled. Stems die back after bloom, so care is needed to trim dead matter. Full sun. Little water. Drought tolerant.

Potentilla tabernaemontanii
evergreen groundcover

Spring cinquefoil

Height 2 to 6 inches. Dainty, tufted creeper. Small flowers in clusters, spring and summer. May turn brown in cold winters. Fast growing as groundcover and makes a good lawn substitute. Smothers weeds effectively when well established. Tough and persistent. Sun or partial shade. Little to moderate water. Drought tolerant. Suitable for erosion control.

Sedum album
succulent creeper

Green stonecrop

Height 2 to 6 inches. Creeping evergreen with fleshy leaves 0.25 to 0.5 inches long. Roots from smallest fragment, beware of placing near delicate plants. Drought tolerant.

Sedum spathulifolium
succulent groundcover

Stonecrop

Blue-green leaves are spoon shaped, fleshy and tightly packed into rosettes on short, trailing stems. Flowers spring and summer. Good in sunny or partially shaded areas. After it has rooted, it needs little water. Drought tolerant.

Fire Resistant Landscaping Plants for the Traverse Creek Watershed

Sisyrinchium bellum
perennial grass

Yellow-eyed grass
Blue-eyed grass

Height is 4-16 inches. Narrow leaves. Flowers are 0.5 inches, appear in mid-spring. Several forms available including dwarf. Sun or light shade. Tolerates some aridity.

Sisyrinchium californicum
perennial grass

Yellow-eyed grass

Height is 4-20 inches. Broad, dull leaved grass. Flowers in May-June. Can grow in wet or poorly drained areas. Sun or light shad. Tolerates some aridity.

Thymus praecox articus
perennial shrub

Mother of thyme
Creeping thyme

Height 2 to 6 inches. Forms a flat mat with upright branches. Roundish, 0.25 inch long leaves. Small clusters of small flowers in June through September. Soft underfoot. Full sun to light shade. Some summer water required for best appearance. Drought tolerant.

Thymus pseudolanuginosus
perennial groundcover

Wooly thyme
Thyme

Height 2 to 3 inches. Forms a flat to undulating mat groundcover. Stems densely clothed with small wooly leaves. Plants become a little unsightly in winter. Full sun to light shade. Some summer water necessary for best appearance. Drought tolerant.

Trifolium fragiferum
perennial groundcover

O'Connor's legume

Height 6-7 inches. Green mat of groundcover which is deeply rooted. High tolerance of heat, aridity, and moderate salinity. Water well until established, then average water requirement. Full sun or part shade.

Vinca minor
perennial groundcover

Dwarf periwinkle myrtle
Dwarf running myrtle

Height less than 12 inches. Short stems and flowering branches. Best with 2 to 3 good soaking per month. Lavender blue flowers 1 inch in diameter throughout spring. Closely packed. Shade loving. Drought tolerant. Suitable for erosion control.

1 to 6 feet tall

Agapanthus 'Peter Pan'
evergreen shrub dwarf

Lily of the Nile

Height is 1-3 feet, spreading to about 2 feet wide. Straplike, glossy foliage. The roots are thick and tuberous and should be divided every few seasons in the spring. Flowers in summer. Removal of spent blooms and stems is recommended.

Achillea millefolium white
perennial shrub

White yarrow

Height 2 feet, spreading to about 9 inches in width. Upright and spreading in habit. Fern-like leaves. Blooms throughout autumn. Prefers a sunny spot with well drained soil and will tolerate a wide range of soil types. Full sun, no water. Drought tolerant

Artemisia pycnocephala
evergreen shrub

Sandhill sage

Height 1-2 feet. Erect, rounded and somewhat spreading. Soft, crowded, divided leaves and very small flowers. Remove flower spikes as they open to keep plants compact. Becomes unkempt with age, replace every 2 years. Full sun, best with a little water. Drought tolerant.

Atriplex canescens
evergreen shrub

Four-wing saltbush

Height 3-6 feet. Dense growth form spreading to 4-8 feet. Narrow leaves 0.5-2 inches long. Unusually tolerant of alkaline soils. Full sun. Very little water.

Convolvus cneorum
evergreen shrub

Bush morning glory

Height 2-4 feet. Rapid growth and spreading to almost as wide. Silky smooth leaves. Flowers produced from May to September. Needs light soil and fast drainage. Prune severely to renew plant. More compact form in full sun. Tolerates some aridity.

Cotoneaster congestus
evergreen shrub

Likiano

Height to 3 feet. Slow growing. Dense, downward curving branches with tiny leaves and small fruit. Full sun, little or no water once established. Suitable for erosion control.

Fire Resistant Landscaping Plants for the Traverse Creek Watershed

Eschscholzia californica
perennial groundcover

California poppy

Height 8 to 24 inches. Single flowers 2 inches wide on stem tips. Blooms close at night and on gray days. Unless dead flowers are trimmed off regularly, plants go to seed and all part turn straw color. Full sun, summer water extend blooms. Drought tolerant.

Eunymous fortunei radicans
evergreen shrub

Winter creeper

Vining, trailing shrub if allowed to climb. Will form spreading mass to 20 feet or more. Touch with thick-textured leaves. Best in full sun or light shade. Needs moderate water.

Gazania ringens leucolaena
Gazania uniflora
perennial groundcover

Trailing gazania

Stems to about 16 inches long, glabrous or hairy. Leaves to 3.25 inches long. Showy flowers, spring through summer, close at night and during overcast days. Full sun, occasional dry season watering. Suitable for erosion control.

Hemerocallis spp.
deciduous or evergreen shrub

Daylily

Height 1 to 6 feet. Large clumps of arching, sword shaped leaves. Lily-like flowers stand well above the foliage. Snap off faded flowers daily. Very tough, persistent and pest free. Adapts to almost any kind of soil. Divide crowded plants in early spring or late fall. Full sun or partial shade in hottest areas. Water throughly during bloom. Drought tolerant. Suitable for erosion control.

Iris douglasiana
bulb, shrub

**Pacific coast iris
Douglas iris**

Height 1-2 feet. Leaves shaped like sword or grass like. Flowers in spring. Grown from bulbs or rhizomes. Best conditions are sun to light shade. Prefers well drained soil and moderate to light watering in the summer. Will easily tolerate less than ideal conditions.

Kniphofia uvaria
perennial shrub

Red hot poker

Height 3 to 6 feet. Coarse with large, rather dense clumps of long, grasslike leaves. Flower stalks topped with many drooping tubular flowers. Blooms spring through summer. Cut out flower spikes after bloom. Cut old leaves at base in fall, new leaves will replace them by spring. Increase by root divisions. Full sun or little shade. No dry season water. Drought tolerant.

Fire Resistant Landscaping Plants for the Traverse Creek Watershed

Liriope gigantea
perennial groundcover

Giant turf lily

Forms large clump to 3 feet. Firm, curved leaves and small flowers. Produces a metallic violet blue fruit. Becomes ragged and brown with neglect. Cut back shaggy old foliage after new leaves appear. Extended frosts may cause plant to turn yellow.

Mahonia repens
evergreen shrub

Creeping mahonia

Height to 3 feet with spreading habit. Dull leaves have 3 to 7 spine toothed leaflets. Flowers April through June, followed by blue berries in short clusters. Good groundcover in sun or partial shade. Needs little water. Drought tolerant.

Punica granatum 'Nana'
deciduous shrub

Dwarf pomegranate

Height to 6 feet. Compact, dense foliage bush often grown as a low hedge. Leaves are 0.75 - 1.5 inches, narrow and glossy. Flowers in spring. Produces edible fruit. Tolerates heat well. Full sun for best bloom and fruit. Requires little water.

Pyracantha 'Santa Cruz'
evergreen shrub

**Pyracantha
Firethorn**

Height easily kept below 3 feet by pinching out occasional upright branch. Low growing, branching from base. Small red fruit on spurs along wood of previous year's growth. Clustered flowers are small and numerous. Can be used as ground or bank cover.

Salvia sonomensis
perennial shrub

**Sonoma sage
Creeping sage**

Height to 16 inches. Sprawling mat forming plant with hairy leaves. Flowers in erect clusters. No summer water needed once established. Hard to maintain. Full sun.

Santolina chamaecyparissus
evergreen shrub

**Santolina
Lavender
Gray lavender**

Height to 2 feet, but best if clipped to 1 foot. Brittle, woody stems are densely clothed with rough, finely divided leaves. Flowers are produced in summer on unclipped plants. Full sun. Very little water. Drought tolerant. Suitable for erosion control.

Fire Resistant Landscaping Plants for the Traverse Creek Watershed

Solanum xanti
evergreen shrub

Purple nightshade

Height to 2 feet. Leaves 1.75 inches long. Produces 1 inch flowers late in winter or early spring. Erect or sprawling growth. Sun or partial shade. Best with little to moderate watering.

Symphoricarpos mollis
deciduous groundcover

**Waxberry
Creeping snowberry**

Height to 1.5 feet. Low growing. Spreads by root suckers. Produces small flowers. Berry-like fruit is produced when leaves fall. Best used in sun or shade for erosion control or on steep banks. Needs no summer water once established.

Zauschneria californica
perennial shrub

**California fuschia
Hummingbird flower**

Height 1 to 2 feet. Stems upright or somewhat arching. Plants sometimes shrubby at base. Evergreen in mild climate, otherwise becomes twiggy and ungroomed through winter. Little or no water once established. Invasive roots. Will go to seed and reseed itself. Drought tolerant.

6+ feet tall

Aeschulus californica
deciduous tree

California buckeye

Height 10-20 feet, sometimes taller. Very wide spreading. Mature leaves have 5 to 7 leaflets which are 3-6 inches long. Clusters of flowers appear at branch ends in April-May. Large pear shaped fruit is produced in the fall. Drops it leaves very early (approximately July) unless given ample water. Plant in full sun.

Alnus rhombifolia
deciduous tree

White alder

Height 50-90 feet, spreading to 40 feet wide. Very fast growing. Clusters of flower catkins appear before leaves in spring. Flowers develop into small, woody cones in winter. Will tolerated any exposure, but requires regular watering. Very tolerant of heat and wind.

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Arbutus menziesii
evergreen tree

Madrone

Height 20-100 feet. Forms a broad, round head almost as wide as tall. Smooth, reddish brown bark peels in thin flakes. Leathery, 3-6 inch leaves. Flowers in spring, followed by clusters of berries in early fall. It must have fast drainage and non-alkaline water. Water just enough to keep plants going until they are established, then only infrequent deep waterings. Full sun. Drought tolerant. Useful for erosion control.

Arbutus unedo
evergreen tree

Strawberry tree

Height 8-35 feet. Slow growing with equal amount of spread to height. Basal suckers, stem sprouts. Can be pruned to make open crown. Unpruned it forms a screen. Trunk and branches have shreddy bark. Trees tend to become twisted and gnarled with age.

Campsis radicans
deciduous vine

**Trumpet vine
Trumpet creeper**

Height to 40 feet, fast growing. Flowers in clusters, Aug - Sept. Vigorous climber that clings to wood, brick and stucco with aerial rootlets. Unless thinned, old plants become top heavy and pull away from supporting surface. Spreads easily by suckering roots. Full sun or partial shade. Low water requirement. Drought tolerant.

Ceanothus thyrsiflorus
evergreen shrub

Blueblossom

Height 6-20 feet, spreading 8-30 feet wide. As a small tree it is upright and branching. Glossy, hardy foliage and long leaves (to 2 inches)., Flowers in spike-like clusters in mid- to late-spring. Dead matter must be removed from garden. Full sun to partial shade. Drought tolerant

Cercis occidentalis
evergreen tree

Western redbud

Height 10 to 18 feet with equal spread. Usually grows several trunks from base. Blooms for 3 weeks in the spring, produces seed pods in summer and holds them until winter. Full sun, excellent in dry banks. Water regularly the first year or two. Drought tolerant. Suitable for erosion control.

Fire Resistant Landscaping Plants for the Traverse Creek Watershed

Feijoa sellowiana
evergreen tree

Pineapple guava

Height 18-25 feet, with equal spread. Large plant with many stems. Glossy 2-3 inch leaves. Fleshy petaled flowers bloom in May or June. Fruit follows blooms in 4 to 7 months depending on location and aspect. Full sun, tolerates aridity.

Fremontodendron spp.
evergreen shrub

**Flannel bush
Fremontia**

Height 6-20 feet. Leathery leaves with saucerlike flowers. Produces conical seed capsules covered with bristly, rust colored hairs. Plants need excellent drainage, hillside planting is best. Shallow roots.

Ligustrum texanum
evergreen shrub

Texas privet

Height 6-9 feet. Dense, compact growth. Can be kept lower by trimming. This variety is dense with lush foliage. Roundish, glossy leaves have thick, spongy feeling. Sun or some shade. Needs regular watering.

Populus tremuloides
deciduous tree

Quaking aspen

Height 20 to 60 feet. Fast growing. Trunk and limbs smooth, almost whitish. Dainty foliage. Brilliant color in fall, leaves need to be raked. Full sun. Best with regular deep watering.

Prunus ilicifolia
evergreen shrub

Holly leaved cherry

Height 20-30 feet. Has a moderate growth rate. Usually broader than high. Mature leaves resemble holly leaves. Three to six inch flowers spikes appear in March. Round edible fruit is produced. Growth rate and appearance are improved by deep, infrequent watering. Best in full sun.

Prunus lyonii
evergreen shrub

Catalina cherry

Height to 45 feet if grown as a tree. Spreads to over 30 feet wide. Produces flower clusters April-May, followed by large fruits. Full sun. Little or no irrigation once established.

Fire Resistant Landscaping Plants for the Traverse Creek Watershed

Prunus spp.	Plum, peach, cherry, apricot, cherry
Varies with species. Most are best in sun.	

Punica granatum deciduous shrub	Pomegranate
Height 1-8 feet. Compact, dense foliage bush. Narrow glossy leaves. Flowers in spring, some varieties produce fruit. All varieties tolerate great heat. Requires little water.	

Rhamnus californica evergreen shrub	Coffeeberry
Height 3-15 feet. Low spreading habit or upright growth. Leaves 1-3 inches long. Large berries. Full sun or half shade. Established plants need no provided water.	

References

Defensible Space Landscaping in the Urban/Wildland Interface: A compilation of fire performance ratings of residential landscape plants. University of California Forest Products Laboratory. 1997. 170 p.

Pyrophytic vs. Fire Resistant Plants. HortScript No 18. University of California Cooperative Extension. 1996. 9 p.

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