

**DEFENSIBLE**

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for new homeowners or those who need to begin their defensible space evaluation! Again, you can find more information on Defensible Space and the five-step Home Ignition Zone at <http://ruffpc.com> or <http://firewise.org>.

**Five-Zone Approach to Assess Defensible Space Maintenance Needs**

1. Overall landscape and your home's relationship within this landscape
2. Chimney to eaves
3. Eaves to foundation
4. Foundation to immediate landscaped area
5. Immediate landscaped area out to the extent of your defensible space

**Zone 1: Overall landscape and your home's relationship within this landscape**

- The direction or aspect of your home can determine the type of vegetation and therefore how fast it regrows. Do you need to rethin your trees to maintain the original spacing of six to eight feet (average) between trees?
- Examine your driveway—your ingress/egress routes—for clearances, damaged or unhealthy trees. Look up! Remove leaners and trim overhanging limbs or new ladder fuels all along your driveway.
- Has there been any disease or mortality in your forest stands that you should remove? (Remember: no dead materials within the first 100 feet around your home!)
- Have you added an outbuilding, a fence line or expanded the deck recently? New improvements *push out* your defensible space/home ignition zone, so you'll need to thin and remove hazardous fuels in these areas.
- Have there been any changes on neighboring property (a new home built, a road cut, a timber harvest with piles of slash untreated) that could affect fire spread onto your own property? If so, try to mitigate them.

**Zone 2: Chimney to eaves**

- Look up—for tree limbs overhanging the roofline, or within 10 feet of your chimney and trim them back (*photo 5*).
- Are the roofs of all structures in good shape? Is it a fire-resistant material and sound with no shingles damaged or missing? If it's tile, are all openings covered with a fine wire mesh, so that embers, animals and leaves can't enter?
- Are your roofs clean of litter and debris? What about the gutters? Clean them all!

**Zone 3: Eaves to foundation**

- Attic, eave and soffit vents and crawl spaces: walk all around your structures checking to make sure they are securely covered with a fine wire mesh of one-quarter inch or less. Clean out litter or trash, and cut away all plant material.
- Check all window screens to make sure they are in good shape. Metal screens won't melt in the event of a wildfire.
- Vegetation underneath windows should be low enough that flames *cannot* reach to the sill. Use fire-resistant plants; trim or replace as needed.
- House or structure walls: in good shape, no damaged siding or holes, and no flammable materials stored against the walls. Firewood should be at least 30 feet from structures. Some green, healthy, fire-resistant plants against a home's siding actually can help deflect radiant heat from a wildfire's flames. But keep plants away from windows and other openings!
- Decks or balconies: what's underneath? No vegetation, weeds, litter, leaves or storage—they can all ignite from embers. Screen in the crawl space underneath with fine-mesh wire.
- Foundation lines are a common place for leaves and litter to accumulate. Know when your trees drop their leaves or needles (madrone in July; pine needles in August or September; and oak later in the fall) and keep them raked, especially during fire season!

**Zone 4: Foundation to immediate landscaped area**

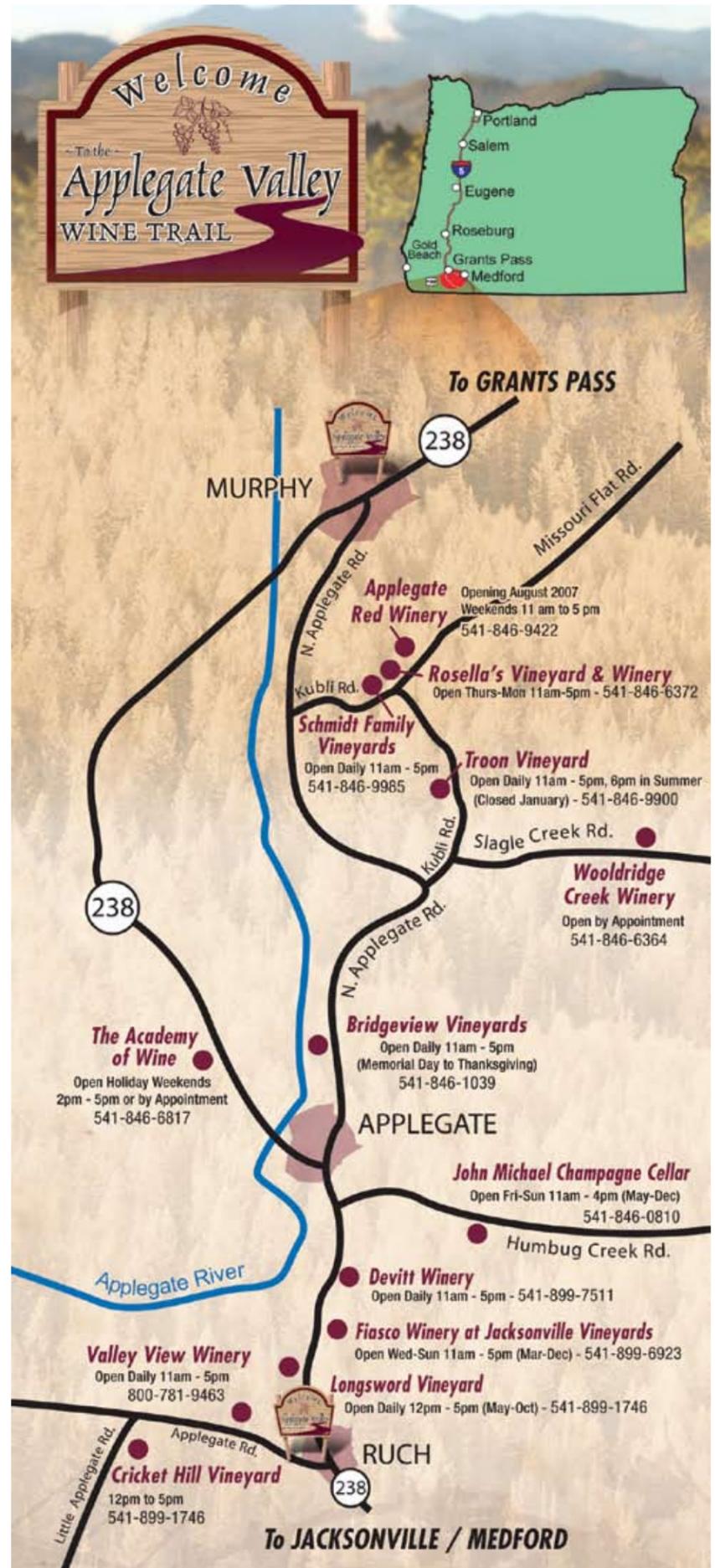
- Your yard: are you using fire-resistant plants? Coniferous shrubs such as juniper have high amounts of resin and dead plant materials in them, so are highly flammable. Replace them!
- Groundcovers: bark, chips, peat or mulch are all flammable. Keep them several feet away from the house foundation, and break up the chain of fuels by replacing some with rocks, pebbles or pavers.
- Vegetation around or under items such as propane tanks, power poles and lines, RVs and motor vehicles should be removed or trimmed down prior to Fire Season.
- Outbuildings: thin vegetation around them just like the main home and garage!

**Zone 5: Immediate landscaped area out to extent of your defensible space**

- Analyze this zone by looking for *continuous trails* of anything flammable that leads to your home. This could be a wooden fence that surrounds the yard and is attached to the wood siding of your house. It could be a pathway of old redwood bark that leads to the garden, or a row of juniper bushes lining the driveway all the way up to the garage door. It could also be a *vertical* chain of small shrubs planted underneath a fir tree whose crown is inches from your power line. Think flammable as you look around and up, find those chains, and break them up. And, take one last look at the spacing of the tops of your trees. Are they growing closer and closer together? Might be time to cut some firewood?

We hope this information helps you assess the condition of *your* defensible space, so that maintaining it each year becomes simpler and a springtime routine.

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