



Reducing Bushfire Risk

Vegetation Management on private property

Managing vegetation around houses and on vacant urban land

Managing the vegetation on your property is critical in a bushfire prone area to help reduce the risk to your home and to your neighbours. You may, for example, need to take shelter in your house if you can't leave the area as a bushfire approaches. The following vegetation management tips can help to reduce your risk:

- Keep grass on residential blocks (including vacant land) below 30cm all year round and below 10cm leading up to and during the fire danger period (November through to May, depending on weather conditions).
- Maintain a non-flammable area between your house and your garden, such as a path (or short, green lawn). Depending on the flammability of your garden, the non-flammable area may be effective with as little as one-metre width, but may need to be three metres or more.
- Ensure no flammable vegetation or material (for example, mulch) is located under or near windows/glass doors.
- Remove woody weed species first, then assess what other vegetation may need to be pruned or removed. Council officers can help you to identify weed species, or go to www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au and search Weeds of the Surf Coast for more information.
- Remove any tree branches overhanging your house.
- Break up continuous lines of vegetation (eg hedges) so that fire is not connected to your house (or your neighbour's).
- When creating or remodelling your garden, choose fire resistant plants and create non-connecting clusters of plants.
- Don't store firewood or other fuel near or under your house.
- Keep your house (including gutters) and immediate surroundings free of leaf build-up.

Managing native gardens

Many native vegetation types – particularly heath or scrub - are highly flammable and produce intense fires with lots of embers, which may travel some distance and ignite spot fires. In some cases mature native trees can offer protection from radiant heat provided they are not too close to the house.

In determining native vegetation clearance it is important to consider protection of the natural environment and township character. Some native vegetation is protected under law and penalties apply if it is cleared. Generally, you are permitted to clear:

- Vegetation within 10m of your house
- Vegetation on your property within 30m of your house (except for trees)
- Weed species from anywhere on your property.

Works for managing native garden bushfire risk include:

- Clear heathy or scrubby vegetation a minimum of three metres from your house and your neighbour's. Note that greater clearance may be required depending on the flammability of the vegetation. You can contact Council's Community Fire Safety and Environment Officers for more specific information.
- Break up continuous sections of vegetation with paths, gravel/paved areas, or short mown grass.
- Remove any tree branches overhanging your house.
- Space trees apart so there is no continuous canopy.
- Separate the tree canopy from the ground level by 'up-pruning' the branches to a minimum of two metres and remove shrubs or other fuel from directly under trees.
- Keep the area immediately under the tree canopy clear of flammable materials including shrubs, twigs and leaf build-up.

Managing vegetation on rural properties

Dry grass ignites easily and grass fires move very quickly, especially under windy conditions.

Taller grass will have a higher flame height, and a fire in shorter mown or grazed grass will spread more slowly. Works for managing vegetation on rural properties include:

- On farming properties, land managers are encouraged to create a three-metre wide fire break on property boundaries or alongside wildlife corridors by keeping grass below 10cm throughout the fire season.

In some instances, a wider break is needed and may be directed by the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer after liaison with the property owner.

- Where a rural property abuts a township/ settlement, significant infrastructure or other identified important area, a larger fuel break will usually be required. Council's Community Fire Safety and Environment Officers can work with the land manager to determine requirements for establishing and maintaining a fire fuel break throughout the fire danger period.

Council has a number of publications to help you manage your property.

Go to www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au and search Environment Publications.

The CFA also has some valuable information on its website. Visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au and search landscaping for bushfire. Both the CFA and Council officers can assist you with further advice.



Did you know...

To enable the fire brigade to access your property it is critical there is a 4.5m width and 4.5m height clearance around your driveway to allow trucks access. In areas outside township water boundaries, firefighters will need clear directions and access to alternative water sources such as dams or water tanks, this includes being able to connect firefighting hoses onto your private water tanks when required.

Damaged supply pipelines, incorrect fittings, or absence of appropriate fittings may delay the supply of water in emergencies. We recommend that you install CFA compliant fittings to your water tank(s).

For information on the CFA's requirements for water supply fittings, go to www.cfa.vic.gov.au and search tank connections explained.