



REGIONAL
DISTRICT
OF NANAIMO



FireSmart & WaterSmart Landscaping Guide

Maximize water
retention and
reduce fire risk.



Where to Source Native Plants

NALT Natural Abundance Native Plant Nursery

NALT (Nanaimo Area Land Trust) supports, promotes and protects the natural values of land and water in our area.

Sales from the NALT nursery contribute to this non-profit organization.

250-714-1990 | plants@nalt.bc.ca

nalt.bc.ca/native-plant-nursery


Also, check with your local nursery on what native plants they offer.

For More Information

WaterSmart Landscaping
getinvolved.rdn.ca/team-watersmart

FireSmart Practices
firesmartbc.ca

RDN's Sustainable Site Planning Guide
rdn.bc.ca/green-building-series-guidebooks

 250-390-6560 | 250-954-3792 | 1-877-607-4111

 waterprotection@rdn.bc.ca  rdn.bc.ca/team-watersmart

rdn.bc.ca

FireSmart & WaterSmart Landscaping

WaterSmart and FireSmart landscaping is all about making design choices that maximize water retention as well as reduce fire risk. This guide combines these principles with East Coast of Vancouver Island climate and native species in mind.

WaterSmart design aims to enhance resilience to drought by reducing the amount of watering required and increasing the water storage capacity of your landscape soils.

FireSmart landscaping reduces the risk of wildfire damaging structures on your property. Changes within 10 metres of your home will have the biggest impact. Most importantly, make sure that you maintain a 1.5-metre, non-combustible zone around your entire home and any attachments including fences and sheds.

Why Plant in Zones?

All plants need to be watered differently. By grouping plants into zones based on watering requirements and maintenance, you can minimize the water you use, reduce maintenance and keep all of your plants healthy.

(Zone 1 – closest to your house)

Zone 1 includes ornamental plants and annuals. These plants require the most maintenance, pruning, watering and fertilizing so group them along pathways and within Zone 1 to make watering easier.

To be FireSmart, select fire resistant plants and shrubs and plant with low density in this zone. Avoid any woody debris including bark mulch.

(Zone 2 – middle of yard or garden)

The plants in Zone 2, including lawns, require less water during times of drought. Locate this zone in the middle of your yard or garden, as once the plants

Planting and Home Ignition Zones



- Non-Combustible Zone** (0 - 1.5 metres from house)
- Zone 1** (1.5 - 10 metres from house)
- Zone 2** (10 - 30 metres from house)
- Zone 3** (30 - 100 metres from house)

are established they will require minimal watering and maintenance. Thin and prune evergreen trees to reduce fire hazard in this area. If possible, space evergreen trees to create at least 3 metres of horizontal space between tree crowns and remove all branches to a height of 2m from the ground.

(Zone 3 – furthest from your house)

Located in areas that are difficult to water, Zone 3 plants typically consist of native plants, evergreen trees and shrubs. The plants in this zone rarely require attention to look good, do not require irrigation and create a green backdrop year round. Look for opportunities to create a fire break by creating space between trees and other potentially flammable vegetation.



Considerations

- Plant trees and shrubs at least 10 meters away from buildings to ensure branches do not touch or hang over roofs.
- Use decorative rock, pathways, retaining walls, especially within the 1.5 metre non-combustible zone.
- Bark, evergreen needles, and other plant-based mulches are flammable and should not be used next to buildings. Consider gravel and rock mulch instead.
- Mature compost is FireSmart and WaterSmart and beneficial for fire-resistant plants next to buildings; it keeps moisture in the ground and protect plants from drying out or from frost.

What to look for when selecting plants

- Moist, small waxy or fuzzy leaves
- Many healthy leaves
- Water-like sap with little or no odour
- Plants with healthy stems that won't accumulate dead material

What to avoid when selecting plants

- Loose papery bark
- Trees and shrubs that accumulate dry dead material in their branches
- Plants with aromatic resinous leaves and stems

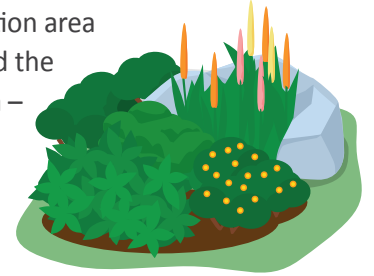
Flammable plants to avoid close to your home

- Acacia
- Eucalyptus
- Bamboo
- Pine
- Juniper
- Cypress
- Cedar

Rain gardens and swales

Swale – A shallow trench that helps rainwater drain into and be stored in the soil.

Rain Garden – A sunken garden near a non-permeable surface or gutter to collect and absorb the rainwater runoff. Determine the amount of rain water to be collected – based on collection area of roof or paved surface and the average rainfall in your area – to build the correct depth, shape and size.



Rainwater harvesting

Storing water from spring rainfalls can help supplement water supply in the summer months for irrigation or can allow watering to continue outside of municipal watering restrictions. It also provides emergency back up supply for fire protection.

Irrigation

Having an efficient irrigation system allows you to conserve water as well as maintain moisture in the ground during drought. For example, drip irrigation applies water directly to the rootzone of the plant, minimizing overspray and water lost to evaporation. Drip irrigation is also exempt from most watering restrictions which may be implemented in times of extreme fire risk.

Native plants

Choosing FireSmart and WaterSmart plants that grow in your environment helps to support the local ecosystem. Native plants will naturally require less water, once established, because they are already adapted to the local climate.

Invasive plants

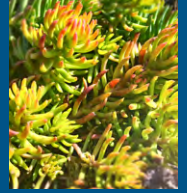
Invasive plants are usually non-native (exotic or introduced) species that spread easily and do not have natural control measures such as insect predators or plant pathogens in place to keep them contained. They choke out habitat for native species and reduce biodiversity, and therefore should be avoided

FireSmart & WaterSmart Plant Choices

Vines & Groundcover



Kinnickinnick / Bear Berry



Sedum / Stonecrop

Trees



Sitka Mountain Ash



Flowering Plum



Golden Raintree



Pacific Dogwood



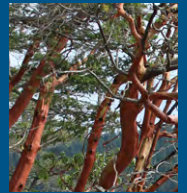
Choke Cherry



Purple Robe Locust



Garry Oak



Arbutus / Madrone

Bulbs



Crocus



Wild Ginger



Nodding Onion



Lily

Perennials & Biennials



Scarlet Gilia



Sulphur Buckwheat



Yarrow



Yucca

Shrubs



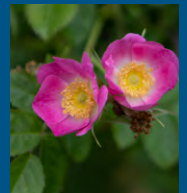
Buffaloberry



Shrubby Cinquefoil



Siberian Peashrub



Nootka Rose



Fringed Sage



Lamb's Ear



Vanilla Leaf



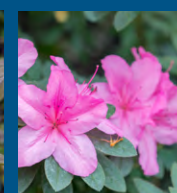
Sword Fern



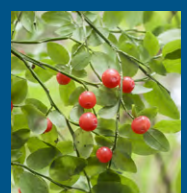
Salal



Red-Osier Dogwood



Azalea



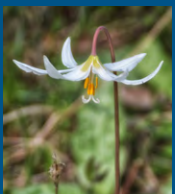
Red Huckleberry



Hens and Chicks



Arctic Lupine



White Fawn Lily



Stream Violet Yellow



Sumac, Fragrant



Rabbitbrush



Salmonberry



Hardhack