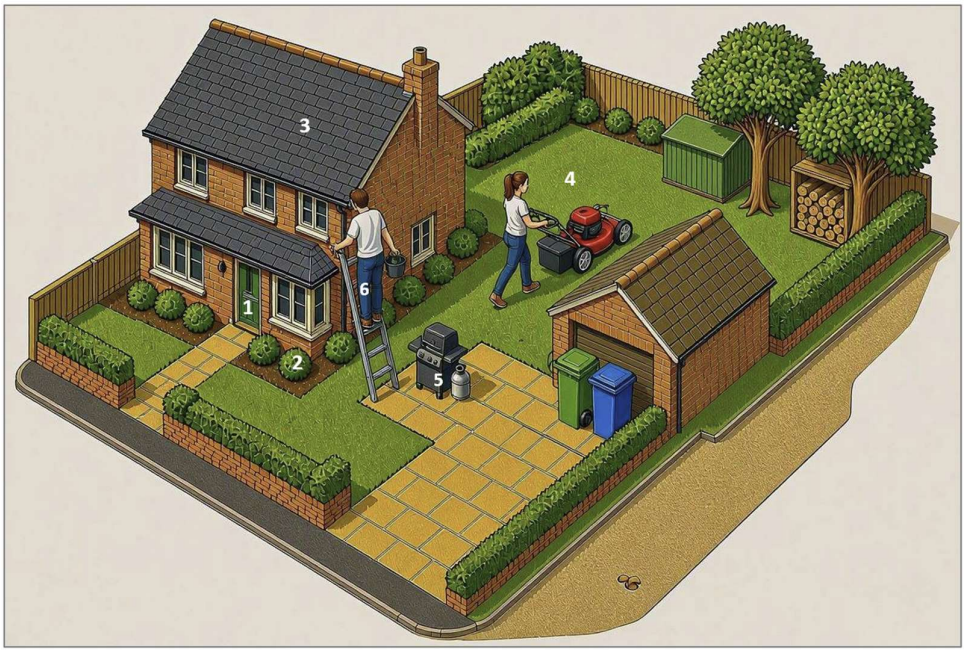
PRACTICAL WILDFIRE SAFETY TIPS

Start with simple steps: Small actions around your property can greatly reduce the risk of wildfire damage to your home—and many of them are quick, practical and easy to do.

Why it matters: Wildfires were once rare in many local areas, but the risk is increasing as summers become hotter and drier. Grass, scrub and field fires can spread quickly, especially in windy conditions. Taking simple precautions around your home can help slow a fire's progress, reduce the chance of ignition, and protect people, property and shared community spaces.



The numbers in the picture relate to the following sections

1. INSIDE THE HOME: PREPARING BEFORE THERE IS A FIRE

- **Stay informed:** Learn basic fire prevention guidance before an emergency occurs: Fire prevention and rescue - GOV.UK.
- **Check smoke alarms:** Fit smoke alarms on every floor, keep them maintained, and test them at least once a week.
- **Plan your escape:** Agree a night-time escape route and make sure everyone in the household knows what to do if a fire breaks out.
- **Prepare for evacuation:** Create a wildfire evacuation plan, including where to go, what to take, and how to contact family members.
- **Protect key documents:** Keep important paperwork in a fire-resistant safe or another secure, easy-to-access place.
- **Seek Guidance**: Contact your local fire service for more information and advice. Keep safe and well | Oxfordshire County Council

2. CREATE A SAFE PERIMETER

Create a clear, low-risk defensible zone around the house, sheds, garages and other outbuildings. Aim for a 1–2 metre fire break wherever possible, using planting and surface materials that are less likely to ignite.

- **Clear the area next to buildings:** Remove vegetation within 1–2 metres of the house, shed or garage where possible.
- **Use non-combustible surfaces:** Replace bark mulch next to buildings with gravel, paving or other non-combustible materials.
- **Choose lower-risk planting:** If you want plants close to the house, choose varieties with higher moisture content and lower oil content, such as hardy succulents, sedums, Bergenia, Hostas, Delosperma (ice plants), Lavender, Hebe and other moisture-rich shrubs.
- **Avoid high-risk planting:** Keep conifers, tall dry grasses and dense shrubs away from walls, windows and doors.
- **Remove dry material:** Clear away dry leaves, grass cuttings and other garden debris from around buildings.
- **Store combustible items safely:** Keep firewood, fuel, garden waste and other flammable materials away from external walls, fences, sheds and outbuildings.
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3. REDUCE EMBER ENTRY POINTS

Wind-blown embers are one of the main ways homes can ignite during a wildfire. Check regularly for gaps, debris and sheltered areas where embers could collect.

- **Clear gutters and roof edges:** Remove leaves, moss, twigs and other dry material. Where practical, fit gutter guards to reduce debris build-up, keep water flowing and help prevent blockages.

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- **Check the roof and external gaps:** Look for damaged roof tiles, loose flashing and openings where embers could enter.
- **Protect vents and eaves:** Fit fine metal mesh over air vents, soffits and under-eaves gaps where suitable. **DO NOT cover dryer, or boiler vents**.
- **Keep decking clear:** Regularly remove leaves, rubbish and other combustible materials from underneath decking. When replacing decking, consider lower-combustion materials instead of timber.
- **Maintain solar panel areas:** Clear bird-nesting material and twigs from beneath roof-mounted solar panels and consider fitting bird-proof metal mesh around the panel array.

4. MAKING YOUR GARDEN MORE FIRE-RESISTANT

A well-maintained garden gives fire less fuel and can help slow its spread. Focus on reducing dry material, creating breaks between planted areas, and keeping combustible items away from buildings.

- **Keep vegetation short and tidy:** Cut grass and weeds to below 10 cm, prune trees to maintain a 2-metre gap between the ground and the lowest branches and remove dry cuttings promptly.
- **Create breaks in planting:** Use paths, patios, lawns or gravel strips to separate planted areas and slow the spread of fire through the garden.
- **Choose lower-risk landscaping:** Reduce highly flammable planting where practical and use fire-resistant, moisture-rich vegetation instead.
- **Move combustible items away from buildings:** Keep compost heaps, and other flammable materials as far from the house and outbuildings as possible.
- **Upgrade materials near the home:** Replace timber fencing close to the house with metal, composite or another less combustible material where practical.

5. MANAGING SHEDS, FUEL STORES AND OUTBUILDINGS

Sheds, fuel stores and outbuildings can add fuel to a wildfire if they are too close to the home or surrounded by combustible items. Reduce the risk by keeping these areas clear, ventilated and well managed.

- **Move loose items during high-risk periods:** During heatwaves or very dry weather, move bins, planters and garden furniture away from walls, fences and outbuildings.
- **Keep clear space around outbuildings:** Maintain a tidy, low-fuel area around sheds, greenhouses, oil tanks and other fuel stores.
- **Store fuels safely:** Keep petrol for mowers and gas cylinders away from the house in open, well-ventilated areas.
- **Avoid storing materials against structures:** Do not stack combustible materials against external walls, fences, sheds or other outbuildings.
- **Keep firewood at a safe distance:** Store firewood as far away from the house as practicable.
- **Be ready for fuel spills:** Keep a small supply of sand available to absorb petrol or other liquid fuel spills.

6. STAY ALERT DURING HIGH-RISK WEATHER

- Check fire-weather warnings and local updates during heatwaves.
- Avoid BBQs, bonfires and any open flames in very dry or windy conditions.
- **If you see smoke or an unattended fire, call 999 immediately.** Early reporting helps prevent small fires from becoming major incidents.
- During a wildfire incident, if you are asked to evacuate your home by a police officer do so promptly taking any medication you may require.

A QUICK HOUSEHOLD CHECKLIST

- **Prepare for a wildfire in case the worst should happen**
- **Clear gutters, roofs and areas around external walls.**
- **Trim vegetation regularly and remove dry garden waste.**
- **Keep combustible items away from the home, sheds and fences.**
- **Upgrade vents and close visible gaps where embers could enter.**
- **Stay informed during heatwaves and periods of high fire risk.**
- **Report unattended fires or smoke.**

Purpose: To help residents reduce wildfire risk and protect homes, gardens and shared community spaces.

DISCLAIMER

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