Most of our homes reside on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, a Mediterranean climate, fire-evolved ecosystem. Our climate consists of a rainy season followed by a dry (fire) season with the added bonus of periodic episodes of high winds. Furthermore, our mostly nutrient rich soils provide plants the ability to annually produce vast amounts of biomass (vegetation). Since our winters stay too wet and cold and our summers remain too hot and dry for rapid fungal decay, this biomass accumulates creating an ever increasing fuel load and fire danger. Historically, lightning, volcanic eruptions, Native Americans, and early Europeans started fires to keep the ever-increasing fuel load in check. These repeated mostly low-to-moderate intensity fires maintained cleaner forest floors.

All of Nevada County’s native plants and animals evolved under this pattern of periodic fire events. Repeated fire left forests much more open with fewer trees spaced further apart and periodically consumed brush and small trees thickets. But most importantly, these fires cleansed the forest floor of accumulations of dead biomass (ground fuel). A wildfire cannot maintain itself or its intensity without sufficient continuous ground fuel.
Today's forests contain conditions far different than historic forests. Through fire exclusion policies and poor land management practices, we Humans have sent forests down a completely new and destructive evolutionary path. Some native plants and animals prefer this new direction and thrive; however, most do not. Our forest ecosystems exist as unhealthy fuel loaded powder kegs prone to catastrophic fire. Our forests are weak and sickly due to too many trees growing too closely together. The unnaturally dense brush and small trees provide a fuel ladder for fire to climb into the crowns of trees. The huge amounts of dead vegetation on forest floors provide the perfect medium to perpetuate high intensity fires.

Human's created most of this fuel-loaded condition and Humans must respond appropriately to correct this imbalance. Historically, this relatively new, heavy fuel loaded vegetation type was never a large component of forests before fire exclusion. Cleaning by cutting and removing decadent brush, thinning trees and pruning the branches of the remaining trees up eight or ten feet high helps greatly. However, most importantly, removing most of the accumulated dead ground fuel around your home will mimic a periodic fire regime and create a forest setting more similar to what originally existed, a setting where catastrophic wildfire was the rarity not the norm.
Is a 30-foot clearance around your home adequate protection from a wildfire? **Absolutely not!** In fact, Public Resource Code 4291, the 30-foot clearance rule, was originally written to protect *forestland from individual structure fires*, not the other way around. The law was designed to provide firefighters a 30-foot clearance around homes to help confine structure fires to just the building and not spread to the surrounding forest. A wildfire racing towards a home presents much greater challenges and risks to firefighters than simply containing a structure fire. Firefighters need more room to safely maneuver and fight an oncoming wildfire.
All other wildfire protection and prevention measures mean little if homeowners do not create adequate fuel reduction perimeters. For most homes, a buffer of dramatically reduced burnable vegetation, 100 feet wide, vastly improves the probability that firefighters can save both your life and your home. The better landowners prepare for the inevitable fire event, the safer and more aggressive firefighters can push their protection and suppression efforts. The faster firefighters gain control, the less loss of life, destruction of property, and damage to existing wildlife habitat.

We must all accept biological realities and biological responsibilities to live in and fit into our fire evolved ecosystem. Ignore these biological realities and responsibilities and you risk becoming a casualty with no one to blame but yourself.

**Firewise and Fire Safe does not mean Fire Proof!!!**
Alder
Arroya Lupine
Baby Blue Eyes, Five Spot
Birds Eye
Blanket Flower
Bloomers Tiger Lily
Blue Elderberry
Blue Flax
Blue Oak
Blue Wildrye
Box Elder
Brodiaea
Butterfly Weed
Buttonwillow
California Barberries
California Bells, Chinese Lantern
California Black Oak
California Blue-Eyed Grass
California Fuchsia
California Huckleberry
California Melica
California Mock Orange
California Poppy
California Snowdrop Bush
California Wood Fern
Camas
Chia
Chinese Houses
Chocolate Lily
Chocolate Lily, Yellow Bells
Coyote Mint

Alders
Lupins
Baby Blue Eyes, Five Spots
Birds Eye
Blanket Flowers
Bloomers Tiger Lilies
Blue Elderberries
Blue Flax
Blue Oaks
Blue Wildryes
Box Elders
Brodiaeas
Butterfly Weeds
Buttonwillows
California Barberries
California Bells, Chinese Lanterns
California Black Oaks
California Blue-Eyed Grasses
California Fuchsias
California Huckleberries
California Melicas
California Mock Oranges
California Poppies
California Snowdrop Bushes
California Wood Ferns
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Chocolate Lilies, Yellow Bells
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Brodiaeas
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Buttonwillows
California Barberries
California Bells, Chinese Lanterns
California Black Oaks
California Blue-Eyed Grasses
California Fuchsias
California Huckleberries
California Melicas
California Mock Oranges
California Poppies
California Snowdrop Bushes
California Wood Ferns
Camas
Chias
Chinese Houses
Chocolate Lilies
Chocolate Lilies, Yellow Bells
Coyote Mints
Creeping Wildrye
Crimson Columbine
Deergrass
Delphinium
Desert Mallow
Douglas Spiraea
Douglas’ Coreopsis
Evening Primrose
Evergreen Huckleberry
Fairy Lanterns
Farewell to Spring
Fawn Lily
Firecracker Flower
Five Fingered Fern
Flannel Bush
Flowering Ash / Foothill Ash
Foothills Penstemon
Fremont Camas
Fremont Poplar
Giant Chain Fern
Ginger
Goats Beard
Golden-Eyed Grass
Gooseberry
Gooseberry, Currant
Hartweg’s Wild Ginger
Henderson’s Shooting Star
Horsemint
Hounds’ Tongue
Hummingbird Sage
Iris
Jeffrey’s Shooting Star
Jimson Weed
Lady Fern

Elymus triticoides
Aguilegia formosa
Muhlenbergia rigens
Delphinium spp.
Sphaeralcea ssp.
Spiraea douglasii/densiflora
Coreopsis douglasii
Oenothera spp.
Vaccinium ovatum
Calochortus spp.
Clarkia spp.
Erythronium spp.
Brodiaea ida-maia
Adiantum pedatum var. aleuticum
Fremontodendron californicum
Fraxinus dipetala
Penstemon heterophyllus
Zigadenus fremontii (poisonous)
Populus fremontii
Woodwardia fimbriata
Asarum spp.
Aruncus vulgaris
Sisyrinchium californicum
Ribes nevadense
Ribes spp.
Asarum hartwegii
Dodecatheon hendersonii
Agastache urticifolia
Cynoglossum grande
Salvia spathacea
Iris spp.
Dodecatheon jeffreyi
Datura meteloides (poisonous seeds)
Athyrium filix femina
Lemonade Berry, Sugar, Squaw Bush
Leopard Lily
Tiger Lily
Lupine
Madrone
Manzanita
Maple
Marsh Marigold
Matilija Poppy
Meadow Lupine
Monkey Flower
Monkshood
Mt. Cream Bush
Ninebark
Nodding Stipa
Onion
Oregon Ash
Oregon Grape
Pacific Bleeding Heart
Pallid Service Berry
Pine Bluegrass
Pitcher Sage
Purple Milkweed
Purple Nightshade
Purple Stipa
Purple Tansy
Red Elderberry
Red Ribbons
Rush
Sage
Sea Thrift
Sedge
Sierra Dogwood
Sierra Kinnickinnick

Rhus spp.
Lilium pardalinum
Lilium humboldtii/washingtonianum
Lupinus spp.
Arbutus menziesii
Arctostaphylos spp.
Acer spp.
Caltha leptosepala
Romneya coulteri
Lupinus latifolius/polyphyllus
Mimulus spp.
Aconitum spp.
Holodiscus discolor
Physocarpus capitatus
Nassella pulchra
Allium spp.
Fraxinus latifolia
Mahonia spp.
Dicentra formosa
Amelanchier spp.
Poa scabrella
Lepechinia calycina
Asclepias cordifolia
Solanum xanti
Nassella cernua
Phacelia tanacetifolia
Sambucus racemosa
Clarkia concinna
Juncus spp.
Salvia spp.
Armeria maritime var. californica
Carex spp.
Cornus nuttallii
Arctostaphylos uva-ursi
Skullcap
Slender Wheatgrass
Smooth Dogwood
Snowberry
Soap Plant
St. Catherine’s Lace
Stonecrop
Sword Fern
Thimbleberry
Tidy Tips
Tree Anemone
Tufted Hairgrass
Twinberry
Venus Hair Fern
Vine Hill Manzanita
Violets
Wake Robin
Western Azalea
Western Burning Bush
Western Dogwood
Western Poppy
Western Sword Fern
Western Sycamore
White Alder
Wind Poppy
Woolly Yarrow

Scutellaria spp.
Agropyron trachycaulum
Cornus glabrata
Symphoricarpos
Chlorogalum pomeridianum
Eriogonum giganteum
Sedum spp.
Polystichum munitum
Rubus parviflorus
Layia platyglossa
Carpenteria californica
Deschampsia caespitosa
Lonicera involucrata
Adiantum capillus veneris
Arctostaphylos densiflora “McMimm”
Viola spp.
Trillium spp.
Rhododendron occidentalis
Euonymus occidentalis
Cornus occidentalis/sericea
Paeonia brownii
Polystichum
Platanus racemosa
Alnus rhombifolia
Achillea millefolium
Achillea tomentosa
For more information:

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www.ncrcd.org

Natural Resources Conservation Service www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov
Agricultural Commissioner of Nevada County www.mynevadacounty.com
California Invasive Plant Council www.cal-ipc.org
California Native Plant Society www.cnps.org
Fire Safe Council of Nevada County www.areyoufiresafe.com
Master Gardeners of Nevada County www.ncmg.ucanr.org
Western Nevada County Gardening Guide
Redbud Chapter of CNPS www.redbud-cnps.org
Sierra Nevada Alliance www.sierranevadaalliance.org
Sierra Nevada Yard & Garden Guide