# Bushfire-Ready Gardens

Tasmania Fire Service



## Reduce bushfire risk to your home

### How to design, plant and maintain your outdoor space

# Living with fire is part of living in Lutruwita/Tasmania. We all have a responsibility to know the risk and make a plan.

SCAN TO PLAN

This booklet covers common bushfire risks you may find around your garden and some tips for reducing those risks.

Whether making gradual changes or starting from scratch, every action you take will improve your home's chances of surviving a bushfire.

Remember: you still need to make a Bushfire Plan and leaving early is always the safest option.

- **Make a Bushfire Plan**
- **Keep your garden maintained**
- **Prepare an emergency kit**
- **Report potential fire hazards**
- **Monitor Fire Danger Ratings**
- **Stay informed TasALERT.com**

## Look out for Pig



***Carpobrotus rossii*** **or native Tasmanian pigface (kanikung in palawa kani), is more than just a great low-flammability ground cover. Find her in these pages to get some handy tips!**

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We acknowledge CFA Victoria, Playstreet and *Palawa tunapri* compiled by Trish Hodge.



# Notes

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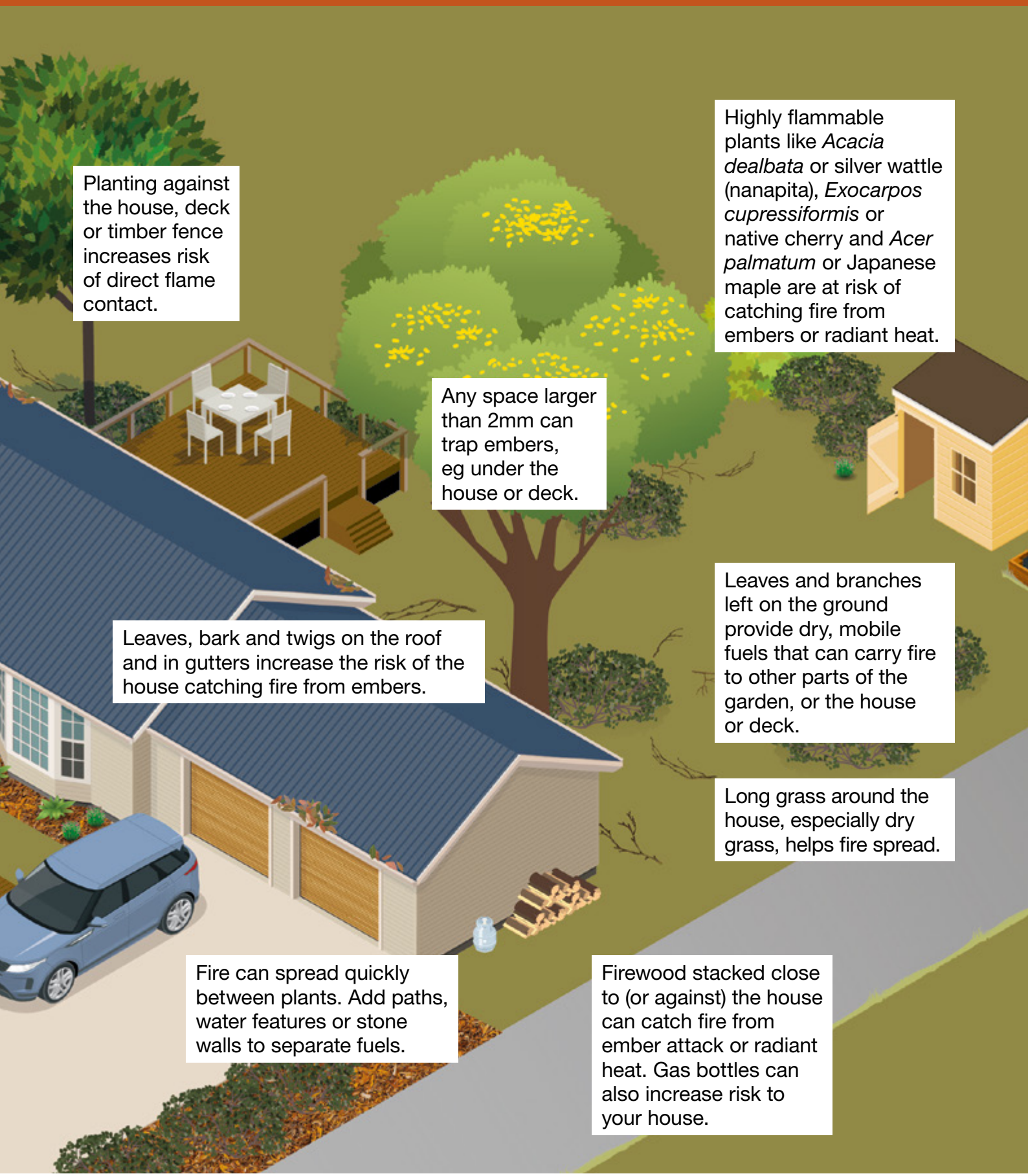
# Where are the biggest risks?

**Gardens are beautiful, promote wellbeing and provide habitat for native animals. They can also increase the risk of your house catching fire when there is a bushfire.**



**'Ladder fuels' are low branches, shrubs or small trees that can bring fire from the ground up into the canopy of larger trees. This creates a crown fire, which is much more intense and dangerous.**




Planting against the house, deck or timber fence increases risk of direct flame contact.
Highly flammable plants like *Acacia dealbata* or silver wattle (nanapita), *Exocarpos cupressiformis* or native cherry and *Acer palmatum* or Japanese maple are at risk of catching fire from embers or radiant heat.
Any space larger than 2mm can trap embers, eg under the house or deck.
Leaves and branches left on the ground provide dry, mobile fuels that can carry fire to other parts of the garden, or the house or deck.
Leaves, bark and twigs on the roof and in gutters increase the risk of the house catching fire from embers.
Long grass around the house, especially dry grass, helps fire spread.
Fire can spread quickly between plants. Add paths, water features or stone walls to separate fuels.
Firewood stacked close to (or against) the house can catch fire from ember attack or radiant heat. Gas bottles can also increase risk to your house.

# Creating a bushfire-ready garden

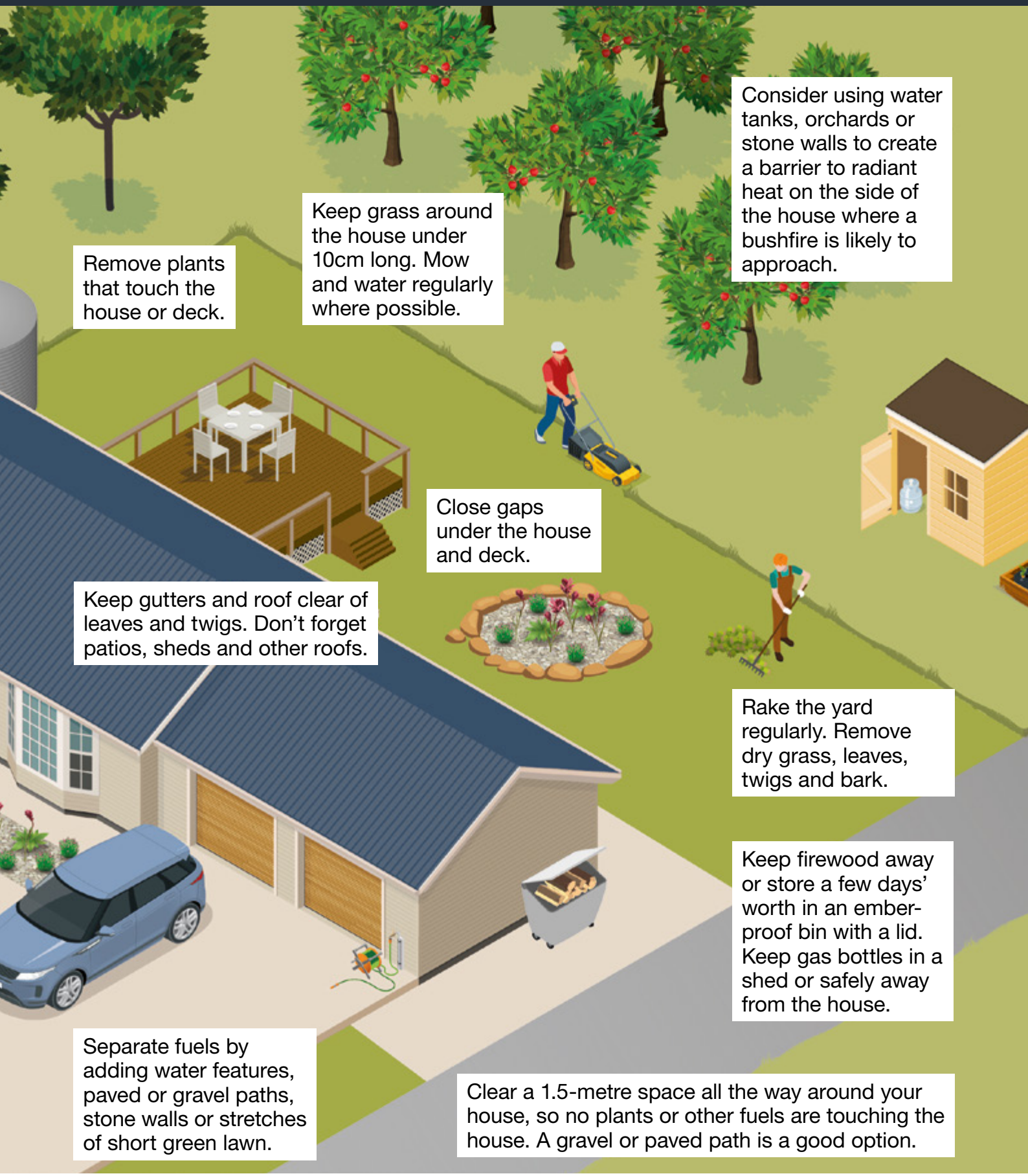
## Good design ideas for a bushfire-ready garden:

- Create clear space around the house.
- Keep flammable objects away from the house.
- Create gaps between plantings.
- Carefully select, locate and maintain trees and shrubs.





# The actions you take in your garden can make a big difference in reducing bushfire risk to your house.



# Planting and landscaping tips

## All plants can burn. However, the type, amount and arrangement of plants in your garden can greatly impact the risk to your home.



**AVOID** plants that retain dead and drying leaves, bark, branches and flowers.

*eg Dicksonia antarctica or tree fern (lakri), Eucalyptus globulus or blue gum (lutha).*



**AVOID** planting anything within 1.5 metres of the house, especially near windows and doors.



**AVOID** plants with waxy or oily leaves.

*eg many eucalypts, Banksia integrifolia or coast banksia, Ilex aquifolium or holly (a known environmental weed in Tasmania).*



Try not to let plants or lawn dry out where possible. Dry and dead plants help fire spread through the garden.



**AVOID** plants with fine texture and a dense branching pattern.

*eg many cypresses, junipers and sheoaks.*





**CHOOSE** plants with high moisture/water content, like succulents and short-lived herbs.

*eg Agave attenuata or foxtail agave, most parsleys and basils.*



**USE** pebbles, gravel or crushed brick as mulch instead of bark, woodchips or leaves.



**USE** paths or stretches of short, green lawn to separate patches of planting.



**CHOOSE** plants with a sparse branching pattern and large fleshy leaves.

*eg many camellias, Hydrangea macrophylla or bigleaf hydrangea.*



**USE** brick, stone or steel for garden edges and retaining walls instead of timber.



For Tasmanian natives, **CHOOSE** plants that hold moisture.

*eg Diplarrena moraea or white flag iris (panina), Carpobrotus rossii or native Tasmanian pigface (kanikung).*

# Frequently asked questions

## If you can't find what you're looking for here, head to bushfire.tas.gov.au or freecall Tasmania Fire Service on 1800 000 699.

### How do I find out if I live in a 'bushfire-prone area'?

Go to TasALERT and enter your address into RiskReady to check the map. Around 98% of Tasmania is designated 'bushfire-prone' so we all have some bushfire risk. Make a **Bushfire Plan** and prepare and maintain your property.

### Can I still have a native garden to attract birds and other wildlife?

Yes. While many Australian and Tasmanian native species are fire-adapted (meaning they are highly flammable and likely to survive being burnt), others are much safer choices. Ask at your local nursery for good native or indigenous options but remember, it's not just the plants you choose, it's the way you lay them out.

### I have an established garden with lots of high-risk elements. What can I do?

Just by making a start, you will be reducing risk to your home. Any risks you can't eliminate should at least be identified and reduced. If you are thinking about removing trees or other vegetation, check with your local council first. For more detailed information on how to plant and landscape for bushfire readiness, see **CFA Landscaping for Bushfire** or ask at your local nursery.

### I live in a rental house. What can I do?

As a renter, you are probably responsible for most of the jobs needed to prepare your house and garden for bushfire season. Check whether your lease lists you or the landlord/property manager as responsible for mowing and garden maintenance. If it's you, the gutters are a great place to start! If there are fire hazards on the property, report them to your landlord/property manager so they can be minimised or removed.

### I only have a small yard. Can I plant close to the house?

Not too close. Have some clear space around the house, such as a path that is not flammable. Avoid flammable objects such as timber or plastic garden furniture, create gaps between plantings and avoid large trees. Move pots and hanging baskets inside or away from the house on days of high fire danger.

### Are plants listed as 'fire-resistant' safe to plant in my garden?

Generally, no. 'Fire resistant' usually means the plant itself is a species that can be burnt and still survive. It may even need fire to regenerate. These plants are not suitable for gardens in bushfire-prone areas. Usually, plants listed as 'firewise', 'fire-resisting' or 'fire-retardant' can help to slow the passage of a fire. Check with your local nursery if you are unsure and remember: all plants will burn in the right conditions.



## I can't physically prepare my garden for bushfire. What can I do?

Make a **Bushfire Plan** that includes how you will ensure your garden is prepared and maintained for bushfire. You might need to pay a gardener or ask a support person, friend or neighbour to do jobs like mowing, weeding, pruning, cleaning gutters and clearing garden debris on a regular basis. If your community is having a bushfire information session or taking part in **Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods,** get involved and have your voice heard. If you live with disability or a health condition that means you need extra support to deal with emergencies, find out more about **Person-Centred Emergency Planning (P-CEP)** under *Handy resources.*

## I can't afford to make big changes in my garden. What can I do?

1. Look at your garden – what can you do to make it safer during the bushfire season?
2. Mow lawns and remove grass clippings.
3. Clean out gutters.
4. Remove any trees or shrubs that pose a threat to your home. If you can't remove them, keep them well pruned and free of dead material.
5. Remove or replace flammable mulch from areas that touch or are close to the house. Windows, doors and vents are the most vulnerable places, so keep these clear of both plants and mulch.

## Do I need to comply with a Bushfire Hazard Management Plan when working in my garden?

Maybe. If your house was built (or significantly renovated) from 2012 onwards, it might have a Bushfire Hazard Management Plan (BHMP). Check with your local council to find out if there is a BHMP for your place. If so, you must comply with it. This booklet will help guide your actions!

# Handy resources

TFS resources for bushfire preparedness
**bushfire.tas.gov.au**

TFS community bushfire activities
**bushfire.tas.gov.au/bushfire-ready-neighbourhoods/what-brn**

CFA Victoria *Landscaping for Bushfire* for detailed landscape designs
**cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/how-to-prepare-your-property/landscaping**

CSIRO *Bushfire Best Practice Guide* for handy garden 'dos and don'ts'
**research.csiro.au/bushfire/landscaping/**

SES *Person-Centred Emergency Planning* information
**ses.tas.gov.au/pcep/**



# If you have an emergency call Triple Zero (000)

- Ask for Fire, Police or Ambulance.
- **Stay calm**, don't shout, speak slowly and clearly.
- When asked, give as much detail about your location as you can.

000 EMERGENCY

National Relay Service

For assistance:

- **National Relay Service**
  accesshub.gov.au
- **Expression Australia Auslan Emergency Interpreter app**
  expression.com.au

Australian Government
National Emergency Management Agency

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**Learn more at:**
**fire.tas.gov.au**

Free-call **1800 000 699**

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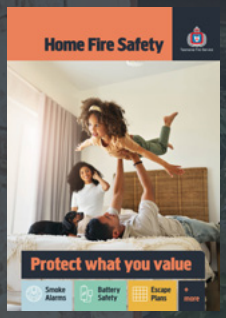
## Also available:



Bushfire Safety Guide



A visual guide to Bushfire Safety



A guide to Home Fire Safety



A guide to Using fire outdoors

## TASALERT

**Fire Incidents and Warnings:**

TASALERT.com

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