

Preparing for wildfires with firescaping: A training for southeastern U.S. master gardeners

Every year thousands of wildfires occur across the country, including in the southeastern U.S. The destructive 2016 Appalachian fires (and other recent fires) revealed that many southern communities and homeowners are unprepared for wildfires. To help decrease southeastern homeowner risk to wildfires, an Extension team developed a USDA-NIFA Smith-Lever Special Needs funded project to develop a fire-resistant (firescaping) landscape training for Southeastern Master Gardeners. Firescaping is a type of landscape design and maintenance that can decrease the likeliness of home ignition from wildfire. The project goal is for Master Gardeners to become a conduit of firescaping knowledge for their community, supporting individual homeowner and neighborhood adoption of firescaping. The project, Preparing for Wildfires with Firescaping, includes a 6-week online, asynchronous training, as well as materials to support a day-long, in-person training for Master Gardeners. An online training is also available for Extension Agents to increase their knowledge of firescaping prior to offering the training in their area. Currently offered in Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee, the training will also be available in 2022 in Georgia and Mississippi. Completed in 2020 and 2021 (with delayed implementation due to COVID-19), the training has been completed by over 80 Master Gardeners and 20 Master Naturalists. Training participant outcomes reported include establishing firescaping demonstration gardens, providing firescaping presentations to HOAs, writing articles about firescaping in local media, and firescaping their own yards. This training is also applicable to Master Naturalists, Firewise USA Sites, and other community groups and volunteers.



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Holly Campbell is a Public Service Assistant with the University of Georgia Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, where she focuses on wildland fire and community forestry outreach and instruction. Ms. Campbell has authored/coauthored several wildland fire outreach publications, including the recently published Smoke Management Guidebook for Prescribed Burning in the Southern Region. She also developed a community wildfire preparedness training for the Cooperative Extension, helped deliver several wildland fire workshops, and is a co-instructor of the popular Warnell-Jones Center Prescribed Fire in the Forest Ecosystem field course.