

Fire-resistant shrubs

Question: Could you give some specific examples of fire-resistant shrubs that grow well in our climate zone and would be attractive in my landscape design?

Answer: There are many fire-resistant shrubs that grow well in Central and Southern Oregon. Most deciduous shrubs are fire-resistant and an internet search will yield many examples.

Fire-resistant shrubs can be damaged by fire, however, they will provide only a minimal amount of fuel to feed a raging wildfire. Concentrate on creating a defensible space with a 30-foot radius around your home that is comprised of fire-resistant shrubs and other landscape features such as boulders, pavers, and gravel.

In addition to careful plant selection, you can keep your plants less prone to becoming fuel by doing the following: 1) Keep plants well-watered and adequately fertilized. 2) Prune to remove dead material. 3) Remove old leaves and other debris from underneath plants. By maintaining overall plant health, fire-resistant plants are even less likely to provide fuel to a hungry wildfire.

FIRE-RESISTANT, DECIDUOUS SHRUBS

Butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*) is a colorful and fragrant



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shrub that grows quickly in the spring to 3, 4, or even 10 feet. This shrub needs good drainage and enough water to maintain growth. It is easy to grow. In midsummer, small, fragrant flowers grow in dense clusters. This shrub will attract butterflies to your garden. Use the sterile varieties to prevent spreading plants into wild areas.

Western spiraea (*spiraea douglasii*) is easy to grow in all kinds of soil. It grows well in full sun or light shade. It grows 4-8 feet tall and 3-6 feet wide with dark green leaves, velvety white beneath. From July to August, the flowers grow densely in variations from pale pink to deep rose.

Flowering currant (*Ribes* species) is a small to medium-size shrub growing 3-6 feet tall and 3-6 feet wide that grows well in full sun or part shade. It also has attractive bright dark-green leaves and pink flowers. It has low water requirements, attracts birds and butterflies, and is deer resistant. Some species also produce edible fruit.

Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*) grows well in full sun with low water requirements. It is deer resistant. It grows 3-5 feet tall and 3-4 feet wide. It is a fine, feathery-textured shrub with silver-gray leaves and a sage-like aroma. Lavender-blue flowers bloom in late summer. This shrub may reseed.

Western azalea (*Rhododendron occidentale*) is an upright shrub with attractive white to salmon-pink flowers that bloom May to June. It grows 5-10 feet tall and 5-10 feet wide. It requires a medium amount of water and grows well in full sun or shade. It attracts butterflies and is deer resistant.

Mock Orange (*Philadelphus* species) is native to Oregon. The plants are large and vigorous with medium green foliage. It grows 7 - 10 feet tall and 5-7 feet wide. Mock Orange grows well in full sun or light shade, in ordinary garden soil, and needs medium watering. In late spring or early summer, clusters of white flowers cover the shrub, and the flowers are generally very fragrant depending upon the species.

Email, call, or visit the Douglas County Master Gardener Plant Clinic at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu, 541-672-4461, or 1134 S.E. Douglas Ave., Roseburg.