

**Fire Prevention Around Your Keys Home**

This brochure was created to help dispel the rumors on what you can and cannot do to protect your home against wildfires. With help from the Florida Division of Forestry and Monroe County, this is the most complete guide to Keys fire safety and prevention.

**Where to Start**

Studies have found that the two most vulnerable parts of a home are the roof, and the area immediately surrounding the structure. The Florida Division of Forestry recommends maintaining a lean, clean and green landscape within 30 feet of a structure can make a significant difference in whether it survives a wildfire.

- **Lean-** small amounts of flammable vegetation
- **Clean-** no accumulations of dead vegetation
- **Green-** plants are healthy and green; lawn is well irrigated to prevent wildfires.

**This may involve:**

- Cleaning dead leaves from where they accumulate in gutters, on roofs, under porches, in corners and under vegetation.
- Keep grasses near structures cut short.
- Pruning tree limbs to a height of 6 to 10 feet
- Replacing highly-flammable landscape material with fire resistant plants like Jamaican dogwood, Gumbo limbo, Sea grape, Sweet acacia, Green and Silver buttonwoods, Satin leaf and Pigeon plum.
- Replacing flammable mulch adjacent to the structure with gravel or rock
- Eliminating any flammable vegetation in contact with the structure
- Eliminating “ladder fuels” near the structure that might carry a surface fire to the roof or eaves. Branches that overhang your roof and drop leaves should be trimmed.
- Avoid planting highly flammable plants characterized by resinous sap and waxy leaves. These include: thatch palms, saw palmetto, wax myrtle, and young pine trees.
- Locating wood and propane gas tanks at least 50 feet from the structure.
- Keeping 100 feet of hose readily available at a faucet away from the structure.

**Free Services From Waste Management**

All vegetation debris will be picked up by Waste Management, free of charge, provided one of the following preparations is taken:

1. **For vegetation less than 4 inches in diameter:**
  - Place in trash cans, not sticking out the tops, under 50 pounds. Will be picked up on yard waste day.
  - OR Bundle and tie with twine. Bundles cannot be longer than 4 feet and not heavier than 50 pounds. Will be picked up on yard waste day.
2. **For vegetation more than 4 inches in diameter:**
  - Call Waste Management at 305/296 8297 to schedule a pickup. Cut no longer than 6-foot lengths. Stack on roadside, NOT under power lines or other overhanging structures. Do not mix with smaller debris.



*Overstory vegetation helps create shade that will help cool the home and prevent grasses from growing too thickly.*



*Same home as above with properly trimmed plants and an adequate amount of shade trees to help prevent severe wildfires.*



*An example of a home with excess vegetable brushing up against the structure.*



*Before*

*After*



*Before*

*After*



*Volunteers work to trim plants adjacent to a Lower Keys home.*



**Monroe County's rules for landscaping:**

**No Permit Required:**

- ✓ Maintenance pruning of native vegetation, unless prohibited by a conservation easement.
- ✓ Removal of dead vegetation, including palm fronds, branches, leaf litter, or pine needles, unless prohibited by a conservation easement .
- ✓ Normal maintenance of existing landscaped, nonnatural planting areas.
- ✓ Removal of up to ten invasive exotic trees such as Brazilian Peppertree and Australian Pine.

**Permit Required:**

- ✓ Removal or major pruning of native pinelands habitat requires a permit.
- ✓ Pruning or removal of plants listed as threatened, endangered, commercially exploited, and regionally important species requires a permit.
- ✓ Removal of any trees four inches in diameter or larger requires a permit.
- ✓ Removal of more than ten invasive exotic trees requires a permit.
- ✓ Vegetation causing structural damage may be removed with a permit.

**If you still have questions regarding trimming, please feel free to contact the Monroe County Environmental Resources Section at (305) 289 2505.**