

NEVADA APPEAL

Homeowners use elbow grease to protect against wildfires

Jarid Shipley
Appeal Staff Writer,
jshipley@nevadaappeal.com
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Pat Wentworth's house borders on an open hillside and overlooks Carson City to the south. She loves her view and considers herself lucky to live where she does, but there is one drawback. She must spend time cleaning and trimming to help prevent her house from being destroyed by fire.

"When the Waterfall fire was going on, the fire department told us if it jumped the highway, we'd have to evacuate. That concerned me and opened my eyes that I needed fire prevention," said Wentworth, 55.

Which explains the large green Dumpster sitting in her driveway. It is on loan as part of a cleanup program by the North Carson Fire Safety Council, a partnership between the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension and the Carson City Fire Department.

The organization sponsors information and cleanup efforts, hoping to reduce the fuels for wildfires by encouraging homeowners in more remote areas to take measures to protect their homes.

The North Carson Fire Safety Council provides Dumpsters to homeowners, hoping to get them to clean out dead and dry vegetation and create a buffer zone of at least 3 feet around their homes. Homeowners are also advised to trim bushes, sagebrush and other natural plant life down to limit a fire's ability to spread.

For Wentworth, that means cleaning up the dead mustard plants that have taken over her yard.

"When they are all green and pretty, it's not as bad, but now when they are dead and yellow, they are just a hazard," Wentworth said.

Pat Wentworth, 55, works to clean up the dead mustard plants that have taken over her yard at her home in north Carson City on Sunday. Wentworth agreed to have a trash receptacle on her property as part of an initiative to help protect homes from wildfires.



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Further west, Wentworth's neighbor Gino Noriega, 62, was also spending the day working on his yard.

"Fire is a big concern for those of us in this area because there is a lot of sagebrush, and with the winds we can get, the embers can jump," Noriega said.

He said he spends between 20 and 30 hours a season trimming trees and bushes, clearing dead brush, and making sure his gutters are clear.

"It's a lot of maintenance, but you have to do it when here because you have to protect your investment," Noriega said. "In a residential area, you don't have to worry about it as much, but up here we border open areas."

The Bureau of Land Management is also doing its part. The agency will mulch a buffer zone of 100 feet on all its lands to help prevent wildfires encroaching closer to homes.

"We appreciate (the fire safety council) implementing this program. It saves us time and money just by being a part of it," Noriega said.

-- Contact reporter Jarid Shipley at jshipley@nevadaappeal.com or 881-1217.

Protect your home

Ways to help protect homes bordering natural areas include:

- Creating a buffer zone by cutting shrubs and bushes down to within a foot of the ground.
- Spacing apart trees to help prevent the spread of the fire.
- Keeping gutters clean and free of debris.
- Remove flammable vegetation at least 10 feet around the driveway to allow easier access by emergency personnel. Make sure the address is clearly visible.
- Keep the porch, deck and other areas clear of flammable materials such as baskets, newspapers and debris.

For more information on the Fire Safety Council, contact the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension at 887-2252.

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