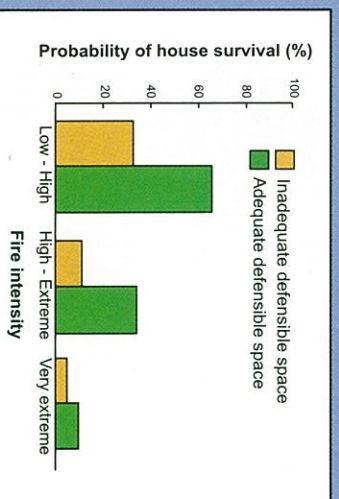


# Defensible Space

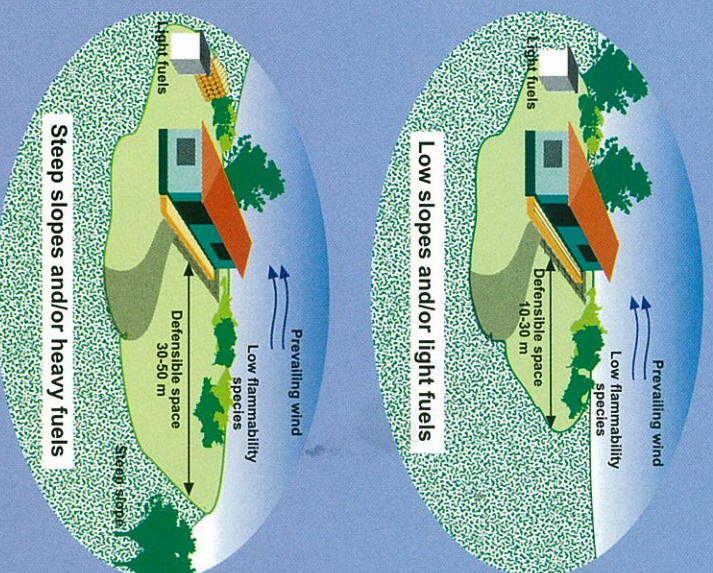
## How do you develop defensible space?

- Defensible space may be created by removing vegetation, and/or by selecting low flammability species for planting in green breaks or replacement planting.
- The size and shape of your defensible space depends on factors such as slope, prevailing wind strength and direction, and nature of the surrounding fuel.
- Overseas experience has shown that the preferred option is for this area to extend for 100 m; this is difficult for homeowners to achieve, but a zone of at least 30-50 m of defensible space is recommended.
- Creating defensible space does not mean that all trees and shrubs need to be removed — well-kept lawns and gardens provide little fuel for wildfires.



*Adequate defensible space greatly increases the probability of a house surviving a wildfire.*

- The removal of trees and scrub may be restricted by council bylaws, or a "bush" setting may be preferred; in these instances, highly flammable fuels should be replaced by plantings of less flammable species.
- A combination of lawns/gardens and scattered low-flammability shrubs often provides the best solution.
- Whatever option is adopted, the defensible areas should be kept clear of rubbish, dead vegetation, and heavy fuels such as wood piles.



*The replacement of exotic weed species with New Zealand natives is one option for the homeowner.*

## The Research

The following flammability classes are based on a series of surveys conducted by staff from **Forest Research's** rural fire research programme.

Experienced fire managers throughout New Zealand were asked to rank a list of native species in terms of flammability in the light of their observations at wildfires and prescribed burns under different fire danger conditions. The responses were subjected to statistical procedures, to produce a final list of 42 species in 5 flammability classes.