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Firewise Landscaping: Bolstering safety and ecological benefit: An in depth look into the benefits of firewise landscaping in the mountain west

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UMCUR Abstract Statement

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3/11/2022

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Design of Educational Signs and a Webpage for the University of Montana's Firewise Demonstration Garden

Severe wildfires are more frequently entering urban areas causing billions of dollars of damage in the Western United States over the past decade. One approach for limiting the wildfire risk to urban homes is to adopt "firewise" landscaping approaches. These approaches focus on minimizing flammable materials near the home and landscaping with plants that don't generate large quantities of flammable material. To provide an example of firewise landscaping for homeowners in fire-prone western Montana, the University of Montana created the state's first Firewise Demonstration Garden. Not only does the garden employ firewise principles, it also uses native, pollinator friendly plant species making this garden unique from other firewise demonstration gardens. To best communicate the firewise principles that were employed as well as the benefits of native plants, we are designing and installing five interpretive signs in the Spring of 2022 with two welcome signs and three interpretive signs. To complement the garden and interpretive signs, a webpage for the firewise garden will be created on the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation website. To ensure the garden will have funding and be maintained in the future, this project will be maintained by the ASUM Society for Ecological Restoration. The importance of the firewise garden's interpretive signs and the webpage are that they will help inform the community on ways to help prevent the potential spread of a wildfire in inhabited areas and improve ecological conditions overall.