With light breezes in the treetops or a relaxing vista of chaparral, scrub oak, or palmetto, life can be good where nature meets the city. While this is truly a place close to nature, it is not quite rural and not urban. When people choose to live there, it presents important issues for both landowners and resource managers.

Residences at the edge of the city present a challenge to landowners and public officials, including urban foresters. Forethought and cooperation are needed for safety and environmental protection.

### Living With Fire
Each year hundreds of homes in the wildland/urban interface are destroyed by fire and lives are tragically lost. An essential first step to harmonious living is to recognize that fire has always been a natural part of the wild environment. With the arrival of human habitation, it requires carefully planned efforts to live there safely.

- **Trees**
  - Near the house, select hardwoods (maples, buckeyes, hickories, catalpa, hackberry, honeylocust, oaks, etc.) instead of conifers.
  - Crowns should be at least 10 feet from structures.
  - Prune limbs 8 to 15 feet above the ground.
  - Rake up fallen leaves.
  - At least 30 to 70 feet from the house, orchards are appropriate; forest trees are generally safe if 200 feet from the house, thinned, and pruned.

- **Herbaceous Perennials**
  - Separate flower beds with walkways, walls, or mowed grass.
  - Select succulent plants, ideally low-growing species.
  - Maintain through watering, trimming, and removing dead material regularly.
  - Avoid planting directly next to the house.

- **Ground Covers**
  - Low-growing, spreading, and succulent groundcovers are very effective firewise plants.

- **Grasses**
  - Select low-growing grasses suitable for your area.
  - Keep watered and mowed.
  - Consider grasses such as buffalograss that require the least water.
  - Grass is especially appropriate near buildings.

- **Avoid**
  - Conifers, including junipers, pines, spruces, and others commonly used against the foundation of houses.
  - Any other resinous tree or smaller plants, especially near the house.
  - Dense plantings of any shrub.
  - Stacking firewood within 30 to 100 feet from the house.