

Bennett Ridge subdivision east of Santa Rosa, where homes are spaced out in oak woodlands, just like Portola Valley and Woodside homes, and everyone had their **trees and shrubs trimmed** to produce defensible spaces, and **cut all their weed grasses at the end of spring**.

Cutting weed grasses only once, homeowners were confident they were fire-safe for summer and fall.

The only problem is that every foot tall, those weed grasses were allowed to grow before they were cut, **added one ton of fire fuel per acre** on the ground, waiting to burn until the winter rains start to decay the straw and turn it into compost. So, tons of fire fuel, instead of standing fuel, was laid down and ready to burn.

And that is what happened--70 homes were burned to their foundations--fueled not by the oaks, not by the shrubs, but by those tons of weed thatch, cut when the grasses were at their highest and thickest.

When the proper monthly mowings are done, then the native seeds and wildflowers can sprout, and those native grassland plants have the lowest amount of fire fuel in summer--equal to only a single sheet of paper.

