2024 Firewise Renewal Narrative Report

November 29, 2024

Prepared by

Sun City Texas Firewise Group









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Sun City Texas Community Association

Community Description

Sun City Texas Community Association is located within the city of Georgetown, Texas, 5.5 miles from Interstate 35 on Williams Drive. Sun City Texas is an urban-suburban community with wildland vegetation (a hardwood, juniper, and native grass type) in the open spaces and adjoining properties. Sun City will have approximately 10,500 houses on about 5,200 acres at build out.

As of October 31, 2024, there are 9,241 homes with an estimated population of 17,096 residents. Sun City Texas is presently one of the largest Firewise homeowner community associations in Texas. Sun City Texas currently has 82 of 91 planned neighborhoods each with their own neighborhood organization.

Sun City is divided into five communities to meet the current Firewise USA requirements. The Areas are Sun City Texas CA 1, Sun City Texas CA 2, Sun City Texas CA 3, Sun City Texas CA 4, and Sun City Texas CA 5. Figure 1 shows the boundaries of the five communities.

All residential properties are the responsibility of the individual property owners for the implementation of the Home Ignition Zone principles. Homeowner education, provided by the Firewise Group, is the key for residents having information concerning the dangers from wildfires and to encourage the management of the space around their residence.

The Sun City Texas Community Association (CA) is responsible for the management of all non-residential property. CA documents define a set of five maintenance levels for management. Included in these levels are federally defined protected areas for karst formations (underground caves) for endangered species. The CA also owns and maintains three golf courses.

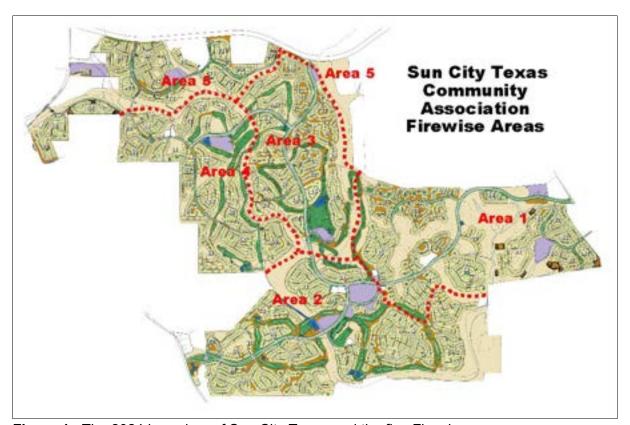


Figure 1. The 2024 boundary of Sun City Texas and the five Firewise areas.

Berry Creek, Cowan Creek, and Rocky Hollow have large hardwood trees with an Ashe juniper (cedar) trees as an understory in the 100 year flood plain. The presence of Ashe juniper trees, an invasive native, posed a wildfire hazard as a ladder fuel to take fire to the tree tops. A 2010 flood (500 year) caused the juniper to provide obstacles that created large debris dams. They created a damming effect resulting in slowing the flow and increased the area flooded.

After the 2010 flood, a management program, 'Flood, Fire and Wildlife Habit Management Program', was developed. As a result, more than 9 miles of flood plains have been cleared of Ashe juniper and willow baccharis. The guidelines for managing gold cheeked warbler habitat are followed.

Fuel breaks continue to be mowed twice each year, up to 30 feet wide, behind resident's property line to reduce the potential of a wildfire reaching homes.

Shaded fuel breaks have been established in three areas of heavy concentrations of Ashe juniper that pose a significant wildfire threat.

Sun City Texas Community Association Risk Assessment

Texas A&M Forest Service conducted the risk assessment on September 14, 2022. It can be accessed online (click here).

The Sun City Texas Firewise Group

The Sun City Texas Firewise Group is a subcommittee of the Sun City Texas Emergency Management Committee.

The Sun City Texas Firewise Group started on January 29, 2009 during a meeting with Jan Fulkerson, Texas Forest Service, with Sun City residents, Staff, and Georgetown Fire Department present.

Firewise Group Objectives

The goal of the Firewise Group is to maintain Sun City Texas as a Recognized Firewise Community through education and activities. This mission shall be accomplished in conjunction with the Sun City Texas Community Association (CA), City of Georgetown Fire Department, Williamson County agencies, Texas A&M Forest Service, Firewise USA, and the active participation of Sun City residents.

Organization

The Firewise Group has evolved over the years. Within Sun City, the Firewise Group works with the CA Staff, the Property and Grounds Committee, and the Wildlife Management Committee.

An organizational structure has continued to evolve for four Work Groups (Figure 1). Each group has specific tasks as follows:

Education and Training Work Group

The Education and Training Work Group prepares materials for distribution to homeowners and develops materials for use with neighborhoods, clubs, and other Sun City groups. It prepares materials for internal use. It provides training for Home Ignition Zone Evaluators, Neighborhood Firewise Partners, and Landscape Vendors.

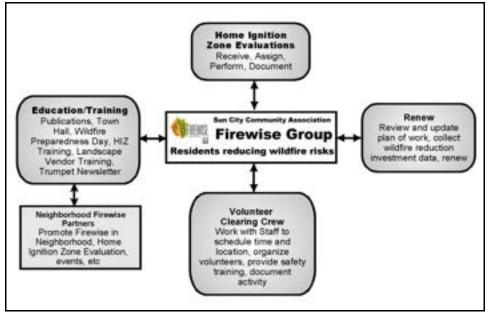


Figure 2. The organization chart for the Sun City Texas Firewise Group.

Neighborhood Firewise Partners

The Neighborhood Firewise Partners is a special part of the Education and Training Work Group. The Neighborhood Partners are asked to promote the Firewise program in their neighborhoods including Home Ignition Zone Evaluation, Clearing Crew, events and information.

Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew

The Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew is a volunteer group that participates in weekly workdays cutting vines and junipers (cedars) in the Level 3 fuel break common areas in coordination with the Common Area & Irrigation Superintendent. Training is conducted for new volunteers. This is outside work. There will be limited activities in the summer.

Home Ignition Zone Evaluation Work Group

Home Ignition Zone Work Group is a group of trained volunteers conducting evaluations of the outside of the homeowners house and property to determine the condition of the landscaping and the house where embers from a wildfire could ignite a fire. Training is required and provided annually.

Renewal Work Group

The Renewal Work Group collects the data and information required to apply for the annual renewal. It creates an annual narrative document to provide a record of the progress the Firewise Group makes.

Sun City Texas Community Association

San City Texas Executive Director

Josh Lockhart, Executive Director, is the contact with Firewise USA. Sun City Texas Staff

The Firewise Group Clearing Crew coordinates with Carlton Mathis, Common Area & Irrigation Superintendent, and Charles Moore, L3 - L4 Manager, to schedule work on the Level 3 fuel breaks and other common areas. Meetings,

requested by the staff, with interested residents and Firewise may be held in a work area to provide the rationale for the work.

Carlton Mathis, Common Area & Irrigation Superintendent, is the staff liaison to the Firewise Group.

Property and Grounds Committee (P&G)

The Firewise Group continues to work with P&G. The Firewise Group provides an annual review of progress and proposed clearing activities and provide advice on the management of common areas. P&G provides a liaison to the Firewise Group.

Wildlife Management Committee (WMC)

The Firewise Group continues to work with WMC to improve wildlife habitat while meeting the goal of reducing the wildfire potential. Removing the Ashe juniper has changed the habits of the deer and turkey populations. Firewise provides a liaison to the WMC.

Partner Groups

- Texas A&M Forest Service This has been an excellent year working with Tessa Goeser, Wildland Urban Interface Coordinator and Kari Hines, Firewise Coordinator, Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS).
- Georgetown Fire Department The Firewise Group maintains a working relationship with GFD to promote the development of Firewise Communities within Georgetown.
- Georgetown Emergency Management Coordinator The Firewise Group works with the Georgetown Emergency Management Coordinator.
- Williamson County Office of Emergency Management (WilCo OEM) The Firewise Group maintains a relationship with WilCo OEM.
- *USAA Insurance* We maintain communications with USAA Insurance to understand their fire insurance premium reduction.
- Firewise USA We regularly share information about how we apply Firewise concepts in our urban/suburban area.

2024 Accomplishments

Wildfire Risk Reduction Investment

Table 1 contains the wildfire risk reduction investment credits contributed for the year. The investment is the value of the volunteer hours and direct costs supporting the Firewise effort.

Firewise Group

The Firewise Group met 10 times. Over the year the Group contributed equivalent of over 4 weeks maintaining the operational requirements of the common areas.

Home Ignition Zone Evaluation Work Group

The Home Ignition Zone Evaluation Zone Work Group completed 22 evaluations. HIZ contributed the equivalent of over 2 weeks of work.

 Table 1. 2024 Wildfire Risk Reduction Investment and related data as of October 31, 2024.

	Summary		Area 1		Area 2		Area 3		Area 4		Area 5		
item	inputs	number	value	number	value	number	value	number	value	number	value	number	value
Firewise volunteers	hours	611	19,439	75	2,383	38	1,210	142	4,509	144	4,569	213	6,768
Administrative	hours	360	11,448	85	2,704	309	9,831	63	2,015	70	231	45	1,424
Neighborhood Partners	hours	206	6,456	7	207	18	572	2	64	0	0	0	0
Events													
Preparedness and Appreciation	hours	168	5,342	20	636	48	1,526	20	636	44	1,399	36	1,145
Town Hall	hours	70	2,226	12	375	13	427	9	280	10	310	9	277
Home Ignition Zone Evaluations	hours	22	700	8	1,018	8	1,018	4	509	1	127	1	127
Firewise Clearing Crew	hours	764	24,285	198	6,282	129	4,087	236	7,521	144	4,589	57	1,806
Debris removal	yards ³	2,033		340		596		596		351		150	
Subtotal - Volunteers input		15,310	80,705	213	13,830	435	18,671	245	15,700	274	16,411	569	19,092
Sun City Texas Community Associ	ation												
Staff work	dollars		384,000		90,686		103,138		67,585		74,838		47,754
Resident contribution													
Paid to vendor	paid	1,527	2,011,927	361	475,139	410	540,380	269	354,103	298	392,105	190	250,200
Own care	hours	184,707	5,873,667	43,621	1,387,132	49,610	1,577,598	32,509	1,033,776	35,998	1,144,721	22,970	730,441
Subtotal - Resident contribution		•	7,873,594		1,862,271		2,117,978		1,387,878		1,539,826		980,641
Total contribution			8,339,580		1,966,562		2,239,787		1,470,995		1,624,889		1,039,942
Sun City Texas detail			number		number		number		number		number		number
neighborhoods planned	91		18		16		22		15		20		
neighborhoods turned over		82		17		16		22		15		12	
houses	9,159			2,163	2,460		1,612		1,785		1,139		
population			16,944		4,002		4,551	2	2,982	;	3,302	2,	107

Community Wildfire Preparedness and Appreciation Day

Community Wildfire Preparedness Day was held on May 3. The outdoor work event could not be held due to rain. An exercise using questions was held with participants to find out what they knew about Firewise. The results are in Appendix A.

Tenure recognition were awarded to the following:

Five years:

John Weber - Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew.

Don Boricak - Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew.

Ten years:

Fred Hill - Home Ignition Zone Evaluator.

Fifteen years:

Paul Ohlenbusch - Home Ignition Zone Evaluator, Training Coordinator, and Firewise Trumpet editor

The Community Wildfire Preparedness and Appreciation Day contributed equivalent of over 18 weeks.

Publications

Eleven issues of the Firewise Trumpet newsletter were published. It is distributed to community leaders and Firewise volunteers. Neighborhood Firewise Partners, and others. The Firewise Trumpet is available online.

Sun City Texas Firewise Group, Texas A&M Forest Service, and Firewise USA publications continue to be distributed to residents. The publications are also available at all Firewise presentations and events. One page of Firewise information is presented in the Sun City Texas Resource Guide (directory) which is distributed to all residents.

Current local publications for Sun City are:

Sun City and Firewise Ignition Zones

Being Firewise Around Your Home

Firewise Tree Trimming Guidelines

Understanding Ashe Juniper (Cedar) in Sun City

Sun City Texas Firewise Plant List

2024 Firewise Landscape Service Provider Companies

Firewise Town Hall

The Annual Firewise Town Hall was held October 8 with 70 residents attending. The topic was 'Does Firewise Work? It's Up to You!'. Presenters included Texas A&M Forest Service, Georgetown Fire Department, CA Staff, and Sun City Firewise Group. Other Sun City Committees that participated were Emergency Management, Citizens on Patrol (COPs), Property and Grounds, and Wildlife Management provided residents with information and answered questions.

Meet Your Community Welcome Day (Formerly New Residents Orientation)

The Sun City Texas Community Association conducts a quarterly Meet Your Community Welcome Day to acquaint new residents with the many activities offered in Sun City Texas. The Firewise Group participated in all four. Residents are given information concerning Firewise concepts, appropriate landscape plants, landscape maintenance, and tree maintenance to reduce hazards. They are also given the opportunity to request a free Home Ignition Zone Evaluation for their home and

consider volunteering for Firewise Group functions.

Training Program

Landscape Vendor Companies Training

The Firewise Group held the annual landscape training session on January 26 2024. The training included 3 companies with 7 individuals. Companies are required to have continuing education every three years to remain on the list. Currently there are 13 companies who have met the requirements. A list is distributed to residents at events, is in the Vendor Notebooks at the Monitor Desks for residents, and on the Firewise web site. Plans are to hold a Landscape Vendor Companies Training on January 31, 2025.

Home Ignition Zone Evaluator Training

A training sessions was held October 25 with 4 new Evaluators and 8 Evaluators for Continuing Education attending. Plans are to hold a Home Ignition Zone Evaluator Training on October 24, 2025.

Neighborhood Firewise Partners

There are 30 neighborhood with 32 Firewise Partners. They provided almost 4 weeks of work in their neighborhoods.

Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew

The Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew held 17 workdays during the year. Their work was the equivalent to just over 18 weeks. Rain, CA staff availability and weather conditions cancelled some workdays.

Other Volunteer Efforts

Each year the Firewise members prepare materials, develop and update materials, presentations, talk to groups, and other functions. This year they provided the equivalent of over 9 weeks of work.

Media Coverage

There were several groups, staff, or notices mentioned Firewise in articles published in the monthly *Sun Rays* resident magazine. Additional information items about Firewise and fire dangers were produced for the weekly CA Communicator and NRO (Neighborhood Representatives Organization) Bulletin e-mails. The NRO Bulletin has a link to the Firewise web page, HIZ request form, and includes articles when requested.

Sun City Texas Firewise Group 2025-2027 Plans

2025 Plans

- Distribute Firewise information to residents at the Wildfire Community
 Preparedness and Appreciation Day, Firewise Town Hall, quarterly Meet Your
 Community Welcome Day and other opportunities including the Firewise web
 page.
- Provide Firewise information at neighborhood, club, and community-wide gatherings as requested.

- Publish and distribute the Firewise Trumpet Newsletter 11 times.
- Education/Training Events
 - Conduct a Landscape Vendor Training on January 31, 2025.
 - Hold a Wildfire Community Preparedness and Appreciation Day, May 9, 2025.
 - Conduct the Firewise Town Hall on October 7, 2025.
 - o Provide training for Home Ignition Zone Evaluators on October 24, 2025.
- Continue the Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew to assist in maintaining the mowed fuel breaks.
- Plan education events for 2026.
- Provide training for Firewise Partners on the 5 Firewise Communities within Sun City Texas.
- Outside cooperation and support
 - Continue cooperating with the Georgetown Fire Department to develop Firewise Communities within and near Georgetown.
 - Continue cooperating with Texas A&M Forest Service.
 - Continue contact with USAA Insurance to understand the Firewise discount.
 - Continue contact with Firewise USA for continued information.

2026 Plans

- Distribute Firewise information to residents at the Wildfire Community
 Preparedness and Appreciation Day, Firewise Town Hall, quarterly Meet Your
 Community Welcome Day and other opportunities including the Firewise web
 page.
- Provide Firewise information at neighborhood, club, and community-wide gatherings as requested.
- Prepare and distribute timely articles for the Sun Rays, Communicator, and NRO Bulletin.
- Publish and distribute the Firewise Trumpet Newsletter 11 times.
- Education/Training Events
 - Conduct a Landscape Vendor Training on January 30, 2026.
 - Hold a Wildfire Community Preparedness Day/Apprpeciation Day, May 8, 2026.
 - Conduct the Firewise Town Hall on October 6, 2026.
 - Provide training for Home Ignition Zone Evaluators on October 30, 2026.
- Continue the Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew to assist in maintaining the moved fuel breaks.

- Plan education events for 2027.
 - Provide training for Firewise Partners on the 5 Firewise Communities within Sun City Texas.
 - Outside cooperation and support
 - Continue cooperating with the Georgetown Fire Department to develop Firewise Communities within and near Georgetown.
 - Continue cooperating with Texas A&M Forest Service.
 - Continue contact with USAA Insurance to understand the Firewise discount.
 - Continue contact with Firewise USA for continued information.

2027 Plans

- Distribute Firewise information to residents at the Wildfire Community
 Preparedness and Appreciation Day, Firewise Town Hall, quarterly Meet Your
 Community Welcome Day and other opportunities including the Firewise web
 page.
- Provide Firewise information at neighborhood, club, and community-wide gatherings as requested.
- Prepare and distribute timely articles for the Sun Rays, Communicator, and NRO Bulletin.
- Publish and distribute the Firewise Trumpet Newsletter 11 times.
- Education/Training Events
 - Conduct a Landscape Vendor Training on January 29, 2027.
 - Hold a Wildfire Community Preparedness Day and Appreciation Day, May 7, 2027
 - Conduct the Firewise Town Hall on October 5, 2027.
 - Provide training for Home Ignition Zone Evaluators on October 28, 2027.
- Continue the Firewise Volunteer Clearing Crew to assist in maintaining the mowed fuel breaks.
- Plan education events for 2028.
- Maintain support and training for Firewise Partners on the 5 Firewise Communities within Sun City Texas.
- Outside cooperation and support
 - Continue cooperating with the Georgetown Fire Department to develop Firewise Communities within and near Georgetown.
 - Continue cooperating with Texas A&M Forest Service.
 - Continue contact with USAA Insurance to understand the Firewise discount.
 - Continue contact with Firewise USA for continued information.

Appendix A

1. The Firewise Group

The Firewise Group was formed in 2009 and approved by the Board of Directors. Sun City Texas is a recognized Firewise Community with Firewise USA, a part of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). In your opinion:

What is Firewise?

Firewise is community safety and education, people clearing brush to help stop wildfires, educate, home protection, fire prevention and making the community aware of wildfires

What do you want to know about the Firewise Group? Volunteering - how do you volunteer for Firewise?

Insurance concerns

How do you get insurance in Sun City?

Discounts - most companies won't give a discount. USAA is the only company giving a discount

What does the Firewise Group do in Sun City?

Home inspection

Brush clearing

Educates the community for keeping it safe

Has recommendations about what to plant around the home

Maintains the data for Firewise certification

Have you considered volunteering for the Firewise Group or if you currently volunteer, increasing your commitment?

Comments included: to be determined if I will volunteer, something to think about and yes, I have considered increasing from a current volunteer

2. Communicating with Residents

Sun City has over 9,000 homes and over 16,000 residents. An important part of the program is communicating information to the residents. How can the Firewise Group be better:

Communicate with the residents?

Firewise uses the CA Communicator, NRO Bulletin and Sun Rays to provide information and promote events. Note: all event information is sent to each to be used 2 times.

The Firewise Neighborhood Partner (Partner) Program was created in 2023. Currently, there are 32 neighborhoods with at least one Partner. Firewise is recruiting more Partners.

Advertise the Trumpet more - The Flrewise Trumpet is an internal newsletter designed to keep volunteers up to date and provide ideas and information for the Firewise volunteers.

Advertise at chartered club fair - The Firewise Group is not a Chartered Club. We are a subcommittee of the Emergency Management Committee. We participate in the New Resident Orientation event in February, May, August

and November.

What communication methods would be best?

- Appear at neighborhood rep meeting Firewise needs to provide updates at NRO meetings but having someone to provide updates is limited.
- Promote visiting with neighborhoods, block captains, NRO neighborhood reps Firewise volunteers are encouraged to work with their neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Firewise Partners Program is still developing. Each neighborhood has their own structure that a Partner can best work with.
- Is there a hermit problem since pandemic Yes! It exists not only with individual residents, but in some of the organizations in Sun City. Participation by Firewise volunteers in meetings and events has been down.
- Post Firewise brochure by trail head signs Question Will the CA and the Hiking Club agree? First concern is their space on the posts to hold materials? Second concern hikers take a document, read as they walk, accidently drop it or decide they aren't interested and fail to dispose of it properly. Who picks up the trash?

What information do you feel should be available?

- Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Evaluation program New residents receive a card promoting the HIZ and the Clearing Crew in the new resident package from the NRO. The same card is passed out at the New Resident Orientation. Periodically, articles are sent to the CA Communicator, NRO Bulletin and Sun Rays.
- Do insurance companies promote Firewise? USAA promotes the Firewise program and offers their policy holders a small discount. Some insurance companies promote Firewise.
- Coordinate/setup Firewise booth at concerts, Cowan Pavilion, Mulligans, etc. The venues mentioned have some limitations. Permission, space, wind, and
 staffing are limiting. The current places the booth is used are the New
 Residents Orientation, Firewise and other events. Neighborhood
 opportunities often have a time limit and there may not be Firewise volunteers
 to staff it.

3. Common Areas

Homes bordering common areas are prohibited from changing or managing the common areas behind their homes. The areas are defined as Maintenance: Level III Cultivated Texas Landscape and Maintenance Level IV: Native Texas Landscape. The *Maintenance of Community Association Grounds Policy* document provides information about the what, when, and how these areas will be managed.

How much do you know about the Maintenance Levels?

There is confusion about the maintenance levels. The following is a brief explanation:

- Level 1 highly maintained areas along boulevards and around amenities.
- Level 2 a natural area between houses in the older part of Sun City. In newer areas, this area is a Level 3 area. Where it exists, mowing is monthly as needed.
- Level 3 This level is the mowed fuel break behind homes on common areas. It can be up to 30 feet wide depending the natural area size and topography.

The mowing is done starting about mid-June and October.

Level 4 - Natural areas will have limited maintenance, primarily for safety and special circumstances. Residents should not enter this area.

Special Landscape Zones - Generally associated with commercial or amenity areas, typically include a combination of the above Levels of Maintenance and responsibility.

Question or concerns? - contact Carlton Mathis, Common Area & Irrigation Superintendent.

Would you know where to find the information?

The CA web site has the primary information. The web site path is to select Community Association Information, then Documents and then select *Maintenance of Community Association Grounds Policy* document.

A source about policy is the Property & Grounds (P&G) Committee. Check their web site by selecting Community Association Information, then select Property & Grounds Committee on the right.

The Firewise Web site also has some information.

A program is available for homeowners to manage the Level 3 area behind the home called a strip lease.

Are you aware of this program and how to apply?

The Strip Lease Program is managed by the P&G Committee. It allows for a resident to lease the Level 3 behind their property. Contact the P&G Committee for more information.

4. Removing vegetation

This section proved difficult to analyze. The topic will be revised and included with other topics and used in a similar event later.

5. Home Ignition Zone Evaluations

The Firewise Group provides a FREE Home Ignition Zone Evaluation by request for resident's homes. What do you know about:

What is a Home Ignition Zone?

The home ignition Zone is divided into specific zones. For Sun City, the Immediate Zone is the structure and up to 5 feet out. Next is the Intermediate zone up to 30 feet or the property line.

The service?

The HIZ evaluation is designed for Sun City homes. It provides an evaluation of a property to determine if and where wind blown embers from a wildfire may ignite the home. The report provides the results and recommendations for the property owner. It is confidential.

How to request it?

The HIZ can be requested on the Firewise web site. Complete the form and you will be assigned an Evaluator.

Have you had one done?

Participant indicated about 50% have had a HIZ performed.

6. Finding Firewise Group Information

The Firewise Group has two web sites: on the Sun City Web site and a public site. Have you:

visited the Sun City site?

Some had visited the Sun City web site. The Sun City site is available by logging in and selecting Community Association Information. Then select EMC - Firewise Subcommittee on the right.

visited the public site?

- To access the public web site on a computer, open the Sun City web site. Select 'About Us' in the top center. Select Firewise in the left column. Select the item of your choice.
- To access the public web site on a tablet, open the Sun City web site. Select 'About Us' in the bottom left. Select Firewise in the left column. Select the item of your choice.
- To access the web site you must log in to the site. The public web site is not available on a mobile phone.

on either site, what do you want to find?

The following where listed: calendar, meeting notes, knowledge, plant recommendations, trim recommendations, registration, referral place & studies, national program & studies, how to prepare for volunteering, and plants & knowledge

What special requirements are needed to volunteer?

The only qualification is a desire to help make Sun City a Firewise Community! Responses: able to navigate terrain, boots (not on site), only do what's needed, Firewise thru cutting, lugging (reviews/inspection), training/directions - what to cut, mobility, dedication, willingness, physical ability, health is not a constant, proper attire - gloves, long pants, shirts, boots, SAFETY KNOWLEDGE, know plants, resident & internet (all posts of opportunities), and improve the community.