

# Living Lightly on the Edge

*Congratulations and welcome to the wilderness edge! Your home is on the border of one of Orange County's precious wild areas, affording you with wonderful views and the pleasure of living close to nature.*

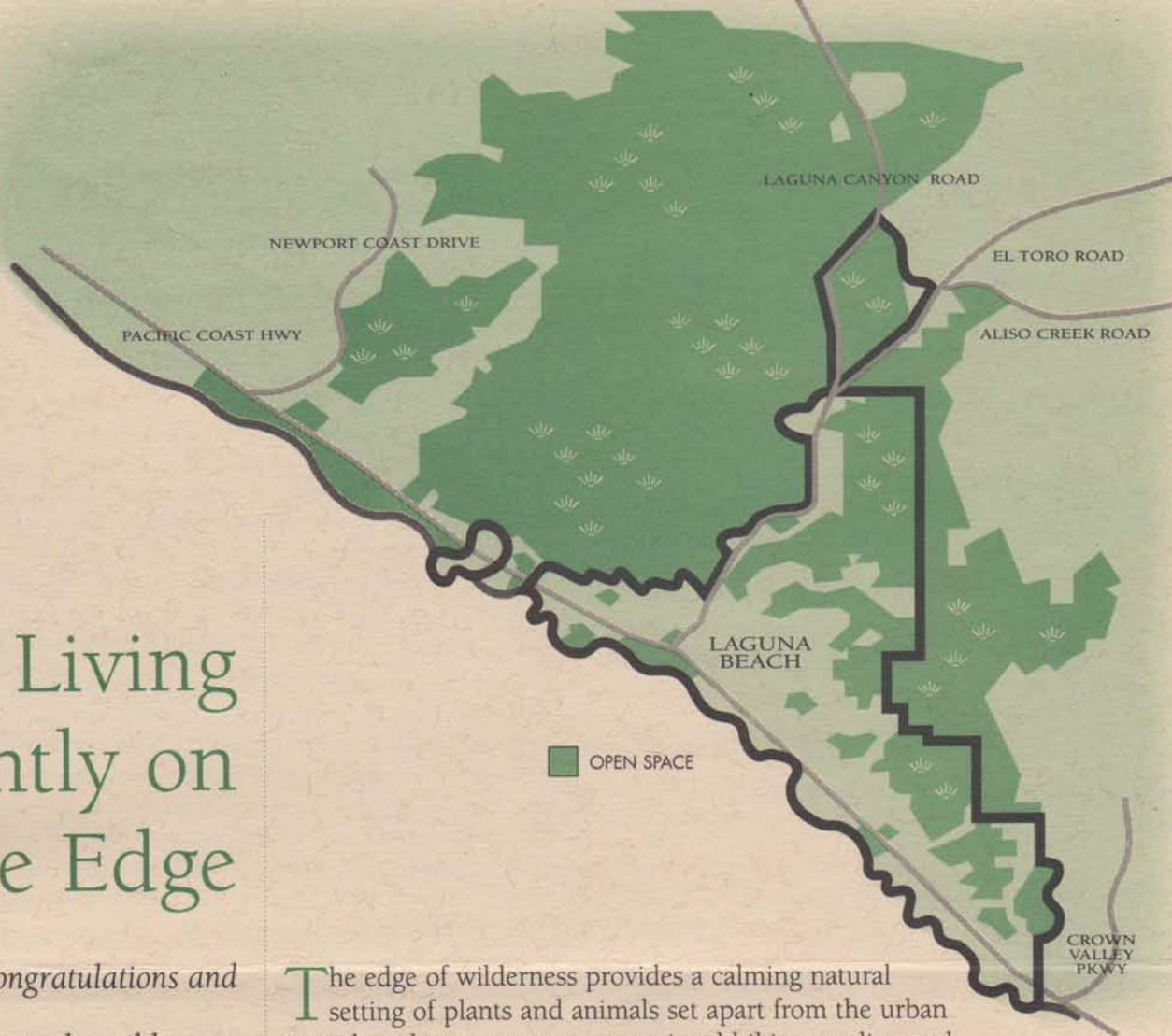
The edge of wilderness provides a calming natural setting of plants and animals set apart from the urban sprawl, and easy access to recreational hiking, cycling and equestrian activities. It also carries responsibilities, including protecting the wildlands from undue human impact and protecting your home and property from wildfire.

There are more than 15,000 acres of open space around Laguna Beach, and many interior wild canyons and watercourses. This wilderness edge represents a blending between humans and nature that sets this city apart from urbanization elsewhere. The surrounding greenbelt, the village scale and character, the shoreline and pocket coves, the hills and canyons and Mediterranean climate combine to make Laguna Beach one of the world's best places to live.

As one of the nearest neighbors of the wilderness, you have a unique opportunity to help preserve it while increasing your enjoyment by understanding its ways.

Following the methods in this brochure and its companions, *Living with Wildlife* and *Landscaping is for the Birds*, you can help ensure that the local wildlands stay healthy and intact for future generations. For additional information about this program, write to:

THE LAGUNA GREENBELT, INC.  
P.O. Box 860  
Laguna Beach, CA 92652





*For many residents, the beauty of natural vegetation adds to the enjoyment of their homes.*

## Landscaping and Gardening on the Edge

**Incorporate native plants into your landscaping.** For many residents, the beauty of natural vegetation adds to the enjoyment of their homes. Some of the most attractive native trees and shrubs such as toyon, lemonade berry, laurel sumac, oaks, sycamore, and elderberry are drought-tolerant and also considered to be fire retardant. Well-spaced and maintained native shrubs planted as a buffer between your garden and the wildlands will not pose a fire hazard. In addition these deep-rooted shrubs and trees are the best way to stabilize slopes to avoid erosion.

**Avoid invasive plant species.** After a rainy winter, you may find small "volunteer" plants in your garden that turn out to be native species from the adjacent wildlands. Conversely, many garden plants escape into the wildlands, where they displace native plants, but do not provide food or proper shelter for wildlife. Certain non-native plants are notoriously invasive: pampas grass, fountain grass, Spanish and French broom, giant reed and tamarisk are the worst, but many others, such as ice plant, can pose a threat to small patches of rare native plants.

**Create habitat for wild birds in your garden.** Increase your enjoyment of the wilderness by bringing some of it into your garden. As your house is on the edge of their wilderness home, a variety of wild birds can easily be attracted to your yard. Begin by providing a reliable source of water, then plant their favorite native trees and shrubs for food and shelter. Our protected natural areas are not large enough to ensure the survival of all local wildlife populations. By providing habitat for birds, you are helping to 'stretch' the open space. For more tips, please see the brochure *Landscaping is for the Birds*.



*Domestic cats in wilderness areas can wreak havoc on wild bird populations.*

## Pets and Wildlife

One of the many advantages of living on the edge of natural, open land is the opportunity to enjoy many wild creatures living "in the neighborhood". The howl of a nearby coyote or a chance encounter with a deer quietly browsing help us connect with nature. However, problems can arise when people, pets and wildlife live side by side.

Unrestrained pets can cause problems for themselves and local wildlife. For example, dogs and cats roaming in open lands can easily pick up ticks and fleas carrying potentially serious diseases such as Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Domestic cats and dogs allowed to run free in wilderness areas can wreak havoc on wild bird populations and harm or kill other wildlife. Finally, dogs and cats allowed to roam at night may fall prey to wild animals such as coyotes and mountain lions searching for food.

Coexisting comfortably with wildlife need not be a continuing battle. There are reliable methods to protect home, pets and wildlife from unnecessary harm and harassment.

- Don't feed your pets outside.
- Keep your garbage from becoming a food source by using receptacles with locking lids, or storing them in the garage rather than outside.
- Keep pets, including cats and small dogs, inside at night.
- Prevent wildlife from living in the crawl space under the house by screening any openings.

Please see the brochure, *Living with Wildlife* for more suggestions on how to live harmoniously with wildlife.

Many native shrubs  
such as laurel sumac respond  
with vigorous new growth  
after a fire.



Remaining on marked  
trails protects sensitive  
natural habitats.



## The Cycle of Life and Fire in Southern California's Wildlands

Southern California's climate is characterized by mild, wet winters and warm, dry summers. Native plants have adapted to these conditions with a variety of seasonal strategies. Winter rains trigger vigorous new growth, leading to a green winter landscape and spring flowers. During the long summer months, many plants' leaves die back and their metabolism slows, allowing them to conserve precious water and energy. The cycle of growth and die-back produces a layer of dry leaves and stems that will ultimately be recycled by fire.

Wildland fires are as much a part of Southern California's natural history as are earthquakes. While both of these forces can produce catastrophic results on a human scale, they play an integral role in shaping this region's extraordinarily complex landscape. During our lifetime, many of the open space lands that surround our communities will burn. The vegetation that occupies Southern California's canyons and hillsides is not only accustomed to fire, but in most cases responds with vigorous new growth.

## Protecting Your Home From Wildfire

**Incorporate fire safety into your landscaping to improve the chances that your home will survive a brushfire.**

- Create a defensible zone between your property and the wildlands, consisting of well-spaced and maintained native shrubs. This will reduce the amount of fuel present to carry a fire and also help to stabilize slopes during winter rains.
- Prune dead limbs from trees near the house, and keep tree branches off the roof.

**Contact your local fire department or city planning department for the following information:**

- How to establish a *fuel modification zone* between your home and the open space.
- A list of fire-retardant native plant for landscaping near the wilderness edge.
- A list of fire-retardant materials for building.

## Wilderness and Trail Etiquette

As rugged and resilient as our local wildlands appear, they need our help to keep them that way.

- **Use park entrances and travel on designated trails.** It doesn't take much off-trail activity to beat down sensitive vegetation, whether you are traveling on foot, horseback or bicycle.
- **Respect wildlife.** Travel quietly to be more aware of your environment and to avoid disturbing wildlife. Keep your distance from wildlife, for their safety and yours. *Do not bring dogs into wilderness areas.*
- **Leave what you find, and add nothing.** To remove any single component of the complex web of plants and animals in natural communities is to weaken the entire system. Pack out any litter.
- **Maximize your enjoyment and minimize your impact.** Avoid crowded weekends and holidays if possible, and times when the environment is particularly fragile, such as after heavy rains when trails are muddy. Respect closed areas and usage restrictions designed for habitat protection.



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### Using and Enjoying The Open Space

The public can enjoy the growing network of trails found in the Laguna Greenbelt, which consists of Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, Aliso & Wood Canyons Regional Park, The Irvine Company Open Space Reserve and Crystal Cove State Park.

Visitors may enjoy recreational pursuits ranging from docent-led hiking, cycling, and equestrian tours to self-guided walking and cycling on designated trails. In some cases advance reservations are required. To ensure entry when desired, call the appropriate number listed below in advance of your planned visit.

PRODUCED BY



THE LAGUNA GREENBELT, INC.

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WITH ASSISTANCE FROM

The  
Nature  
Conservancy

#### ALISO & WOOD CANYONS REGIONAL PARK — (714) 831-2791

- 🌲 Managed by the County of Orange.
- 🌲 Open daily all year, 7 a.m. to sunset.
- 🌲 Hiking, cycling, horses; no pets.

#### CRYSTAL COVE STATE PARK — (714) 494-3539

- 🌲 Managed by the State of California.
- 🌲 Open daily all year, 6 a.m. to sunset.
- 🌲 Hiking, cycling, horses; no pets except on Pelican Point bicycle trail.

#### THE IRVINE COMPANY OPEN SPACE RESERVE — (714) 832-7478

- 🌲 Managed by the Nature Conservancy.
- 🌲 Hiking, cycling, equestrian access by docent-led tours only, no pets, reservations required.

#### LAGUNA COAST WILDERNESS PARK — (714) 854-7108

- 🌲 Managed by the County of Orange.
- 🌲 **Laurel Canyon:** hiking by docent-led tours only, no pets, reservations required.
- 🌲 **James Dilley Preserve:** third Saturday each month, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; hiking only, no pets.
- 🌲 **Laguna Heights:** open daily all year, 7 a.m. to sunset; hiking, cycling, horses, pets.