

Pine Straw / Combustible Landscaping Materials

1. When does this ordinance take effect?

February 1, 2011. The owner or occupant of a property which is subject to this ordinance may apply to the Director of Inspections to obtain a grace period of up to four months. They must show a good faith effort to comply with the requirements of the ordinance.

2. If I use pine straw after this date, am I subject to fines?

Yes. Violations of this ordinance shall be punishable as a misdemeanor pursuant to Sec. 1-8 of the Town Code, by injunctive relief, by civil penalty pursuant to Sec 6-25 of the Town Code; or by a combination of means.

3. Does this ordinance apply to a single family home?

No; however the Town of Garner Inspection Department strongly recommends that you keep combustible landscaping materials, including pine straw, at least 10 feet away from your home.

4. Why is my Homeowner's Association enforcing this if it doesn't apply to single family homes?

Often HOA's decide to place items in your covenants that are deemed necessary for the safety of the community.

5. Does this ordinance apply to my townhouse or condominium?

Townhouses are not subject to the provisions of the ordinance since they are considered private single family dwellings, having no public common areas and are not subject to fire inspections. Condominiums do have common public areas and are subject to the regulations of this ordinance.

6. What is considered combustible exterior construction?

Outer surfaces of structures including but not limited to siding, soffit, decks,

and exposed structural members made of materials that will burn when ignited or melt when exposed to open flame exposing other combustible framing, sheathing, or insulating materials which can burn. A few examples of these materials include but are not limited to wood and wood products, vinyl, and masonite.

7. May I place approved landscape materials over existing pine straw landscaping?

Yes, you can either remove the existing pine straw or place the new landscaping material completely over the existing pine straw.

8. If I have pine trees that drop pine needles within 10 feet of combustible exterior construction, do I have to keep the pine needles raked up at least 10 feet from exterior walls?

No. Pine needles that naturally fall from pine trees are not considered landscaping material. However, pine needles may not be raked up around the base of the tree if it is within 10 feet of exterior combustible construction.

9. If I can't use pine straw as a landscaping material, what can I use?

There are many resources on the internet that can point you in the right direction. You can start at www.firewise.org/resources/homeowner.htm for basic information on how to make your home safer from wildfires. For landscaping techniques visit www.firewise.org/resources/fwl/contents.html. For additional information, you can also go to the NC Forest Service website at www.dfr.state.nc.us/fire_control/fire_control.htm.