

How to build a quality brush pile...and burn it¹

Locate the pile away from desirable trees that are going to be saved (e.g. large oaks). When burned, a large pile can create 10-20 foot flames, and heat of several hundred degrees 30-40 feet into the air above it. Be sure to NOT locate the pile under the drip line of any large tree that will remain - 10 feet beyond the nearest edge of the tree is ideal.

Cut brush into 4 to 6 foot lengths for easier handling and piling. Cut off side branches so that the pieces are mostly straight.



Gold standard brush pile –circled is the ‘sacrificial tree; compact, branches parallel, small-diameter branches on the bottom

Place cut brush & material at the base of a sacrificial tree. Start with small diameter pieces to form an easy-to-burn-base.

1. Pile everything **PARALLEL** for good contact and compression. Removing side branches makes this task easier and encourages accurate stacking.
2. In the beginning, set aside the larger diameter (3" or thicker) branches.
3. After a firm bed of thin material is stacked, intersperse larger branches.
4. If safe to do so, have one or two people climb on top of the pile and jump on it to flatten it as it gets bigger. Stop piling once the pile is 6 to 8 feet high. Pile diameter can be from 10 to 20 feet -Drumlin-shaped is best - if there is room in the area.

Burn, baby, burn

Once the pile is lit, if adding more freshly cut brush, approach the fire from the upwind side (**away** from the flames and smoke) for safety. A sudden gust of wind can extend the heat and flames into the face of someone approaching the fire from the downwind side and cause burns. As the pile burns down, use a McLeod or dirt rake to help move material into the flames for full burning.



Wretched brush pile

¹ Condensed from David Lonsdorf, Tom Wise, Kevin Thusius