

EPISODE 011

Wildfire, Wonder & Who Gets the Blame

Published February 12, 2026 · Runtime 45:12 · Grades 7-12

California's ecosystems evolved with fire. We separate fire ecology from fire disaster, and talk honestly about blame versus responsibility.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Listen first, then work through these together. There are no answer keys.

- 01 Some cones only open in heat. How does that change the way you read the word 'destruction'?
- 02 What is the difference between a natural fire regime and a fire disaster? Who decides which one a given fire is?
- 03 A century of fire suppression made some landscapes more dangerous. When does protecting something cause harm?
- 04 Blame looks backward and responsibility looks forward. Which one shows up more in the news coverage you see?
- 05 What is one thing your household could do before the next fire season, rather than during it?

SHORT READING LIST

The Hidden Life of Trees <i>Peter Wohlleben</i> Accessible entry point on how trees communicate and share resources. Great for junior high readers.	Oaks of California <i>Bruce M. Pavlik and others</i> Field-guide style look at the oak woodlands that define much of the state's landscape.
Fire in California's Ecosystems <i>Edited by van Wagtendonk, Sugihara and others</i> Denser and more technical. Good for high schoolers digging into fire ecology.	The Overstory <i>Richard Powers</i> A novel, not a textbook. Fiction that raises the ethical questions we keep circling back to. Mature themes.

Where arboriculture meets faith, science, and the stewardship of California's living landscapes.