Kansas Fire Incident Reporting System Annual Report, 2014



## A Dirty Secret



This misconception could burn your house down.





Thank you, Camrose Fire Department in Camrose, AB, Canada for providing photos from a local fire caused by cigarette butts. Photos were not available for the Kansas fires

Is dirt flammable?

Most would say no but in the case of potting soil it really can be. Potting soil has a preconceived image that it's mostly dirt with some nutrients added in. Potting soils often contain peat moss, coir fiber (coconut fiber), and composted pine bark. All three ingredients are flammable. Potted plants are especially vulnerable to fire when the soil dries out. Add in a plant that has dried out from lack of water and the ignition probability increases quickly.

With dry conditions just waiting for a spark the last thing that should be added to the mix are cigarettes. Unfortunately, that's exactly what people add. Extinguishing cigarettes into potted plants has caused at least 18 fires in Kansas since 2001, damaging a total of 125 apartment units and 6 houses. The KFIR System does not contain specific ignition codes for potting soil combined with smoking. The 18 fires were located using a narrative search for "potting soil" and "potted plant" but narratives aren't required. These fires are probably much more prevalent than stated here, due to these reporting holes.

Get a real ash tray.