

MORELAND NATURE STRIP GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Nature strips contribute to the character of our neighbourhood and streetscapes. These guidelines outline the benefits of our city's nature strips and are intended to offer information on suitable plantings and their maintenance to ensure they remain a safe and attractive space.

Nature strips are areas of public land between the private property boundary and the kerb and exclude the paved footpath area. Nature strips often house underground services such as gas, water, communications and power.

It is the responsibility of residents to maintain the nature strip abutting their home. This typically involves regular mowing of grass, weeding and picking up litter, however, Council would like to encourage residents to consider alternative planting approaches that enrich biodiversity and social connectivity.

With the exception of our street tree program, Council does not undertake any renovation or maintenance (including mowing and watering) of nature strips unless the condition of the nature strip is considered to pose a hazard.

If you would like a nature strip tree planted in front of your home, complete the online form:

www.moreland.vic.gov.au/environment-bins/trees/new-trees/ or call Council on 8311 4300 and talk to our Open Space Unit.

BENEFITS OF NATURE STRIPS

Vegetated nature strips provide a range of benefits to the community and the environment. Nature strips can:

- absorb rainwater and reduce stormwater runoff;
- provide a choice for residents unable to maintain turf;
- help to cool the surrounding area (transpiration by plants cools the air);
- complement the natural settings of the neighbourhood such as street trees and residential gardens;
- provide fauna habitat;
- visually soften the effect of the harder surfaces of road, footpath and driveway paving, fences and buildings;
- provide a valuable opportunity to interact with nature;
- improve social connections in the neighbourhood; and,
- where appropriate, can provide some opportunities for food production.

Moreland City Council encourages the following nature strip treatments:

- Low growing plant species below 0.5m;
- Warm season/drought tolerant grasses, such as Couch/Fescue, Buffalo or Kikuyu. These are hard wearing and require up to 60 per cent less watering; and
- Mulch – organic barks or inorganic gravel like Tuscan toppings or granitic sand.

ALTERNATIVE VEGETATION TO TURF GRASS

Moreland City Council supports the beautification of nature strips with alternative plants to turf grass. Council do not support the use of synthetic grass on nature strips. Allowing residents to plant out their

nature strips can foster a sense of ownership within the local community. The use of indigenous plants can enhance biodiversity and provide habitat for local insects and birds. This type of planting is particularly beneficial in areas close to local waterways and along nature corridors. The maintenance requirements of a well-designed ground cover planting and mulch treatment can be less than traditional grassed nature strip plantings.

Alternatives may also include productive gardens and no-dig gardens. Health risks from contaminants and public safety impacts as outlined below are particularly important with these plantings.

For more useful advice on nature strip planting, visit Brunswick Communities for Nature:

<https://brunswickc4n.wordpress.com/>

DESIGN GUIDELINES

There are some cases where you are allowed to plant your nature strip without a permit (Diagram A). If you are unsure whether you need a permit, please contact Council's Open Space Unit before you begin.

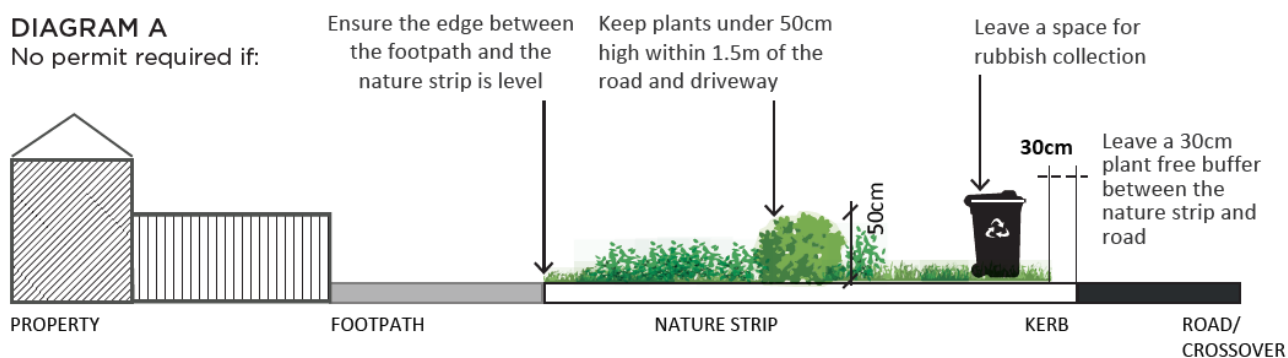
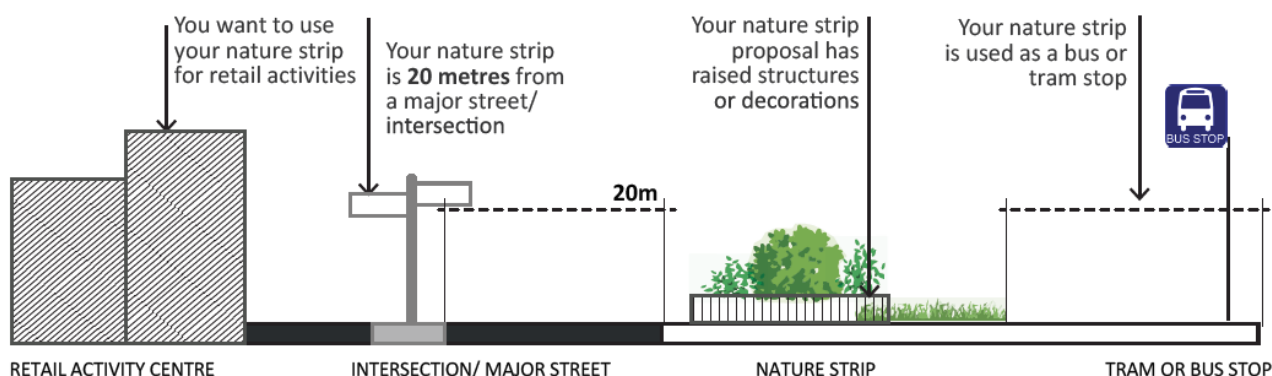


DIAGRAM B
Free written permit required if:
Note: In most cases you will need written permission.



Safety and access

Nature strip landscaping works must maintain adequate clearance, accessibility and visibility for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular traffic when using, entering or exiting an intersection or driveway or footpath. Council will require that any works considered unsightly or hazardous be maintained or removed and made safe.

To ensure the nature strip planting is safe for all road users and does not inhibit access:

- Call Dial Before You Dig (DBYD) to obtain free information about underground services;
- Maintain vegetation below a height of 0.5 metres to ensure adequate sight lines especially close to driveways and intersections. Medium to large shrubs should not be planted;
- Allow sufficient space so that people can access the street from the footpath and can open a car door and easily get into and out of a car (at least 300mm);
- Ensure safe, level heights are maintained between the nature strip and the footpath and kerb. Deviations greater than 50mm would be considered a hazard;
- Hard landscaping elements, such as rocks and pavers, and garden edging, are discouraged because they can become safety hazards; and
- Retain some level ground space for hard rubbish collection, garbage, recycling and green waste bins.

Plant selection

The following are important considerations when selecting plants for nature strip beautification:

- Discuss your plans with your neighbours so they understand why you are undertaking the works;
- Plants considered to be environmental weeds must not be planted;
- Plants must be low growing (below 0.5m within 1.5m of driveways or intersections) to avoid any traffic sighting problems;
- Indigenous plants can enhance biodiversity and are more likely to provide habitat for local insects and birds;
- Select plants that are able to survive with natural rainfall. Current water restrictions should be followed and irrigation systems are not to be installed; and
- Effective ground cover plants can compete with weeds and withstand occasional pedestrian traffic.

Productive plantings

If plants are grown to be eaten, the nature strip soil should be tested for contaminants such as lead and any other potential health risks understood. Macquarie University's Science Faculty provide a simple, low cost soil testing service. For more details: <https://research.science.mq.edu.au/vegesafe/> A fruit tree or raised planter box may be a viable alternative but Council's permission is required to ensure the site is suitable and safe.

Fruiting crops are better than root crops or leafy vegetables. Building the soil up over time is important through the addition of compost and organic matter and will improve soil health. Please note that nature strips are accessible to everyone and nothing can be enforced to stop the public from helping themselves to what is grown there.

PREPARATION

It is recommended that the top 50mm of turf and soil is scalped or removed prior to any planting or composted down. A good option is to then lay biodegradable weed matting or several layers of newspaper or cardboard, which is an effective means of reducing weed growth or the return of the turf. A mulch layer will help maintain soil moisture and assist with additional weed control. The mulch material selected must be stable under foot and remain contained within the nature strip. Recommended treatments include composted organic mulch, pine bark mulch, recycled wood chip mulch and granitic sand. Council provides a free, self-serve tree mulch service from its South Street Hadfield depot.

SUGGESTED PLANTS FOR NATURE STRIPS

PLANT TYPE	BOTANICAL NAME OF PLANTS	COMMON NAME	SUGGESTED DENSITY (PLANTS/M2)
Grass and tussock plants	<i>Dianella longifolia</i>	Pale Flax Lily	4
	<i>Dianella revoluta</i>	Spreading Flax Lily	9
	<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>	Spiny-headed Mat-rush	4
	<i>Lomandra filiformis</i>	Wattle Mat-rush	9
	<i>Themeda triandra</i>	Kangaroo Grass	9
	<i>Poa labillardieri</i>	Common Tussock Grass	4
	<i>Poa morrissii</i>	Silky Tussock Grass	9
Lawn plants	<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>	Weeping Grass	16
	<i>Dichondra repens</i>	Kidney weed	16
	<i>Austrodanthonia geniculata</i>	Knead Wallaby Grass	16
Ground covers	<i>Myoporum parvifolium</i>	Creeping Boobialla	4
	<i>Einadia nutans</i> subsp. <i>nutans</i>	Nodding Saltbush	4
Wildflowers	<i>Arthropodium strictum</i>	Chocolate Lily	16
	<i>Brachyscome multifidi</i>	Cut-leaf Daisy	9
	<i>Bracteantha viscosa</i>	Sticky Everlasting	9
	<i>Chrysocephalum apiculatum</i>	Common Everlasting	9
	<i>Kennedia prostrata</i>	Running Postman	4
	<i>Linum marginale</i>	Native Flax	9
	<i>Pelargonium austral</i>	Austral Storks Bill	16
	<i>Teucrium racemosum</i>	Grey Germander	4
	<i>Wahlenbergia communis</i>	Tufted Bluebell	16

CONSTRUCTION

Before starting any works, call 'Dial Before You Dig' or visit the website www.1100.com.au, to find out about pipes and cabling under your nature strip. Changes to nature strip levels that might interfere with drainage will not be permitted.

Cultivation will alleviate any soil compaction and improve plant growth and increase the infiltration of rainwater. Avoid cultivating under the canopy of existing trees as this activity may cut their roots and impact on their health.

No staking of plants or any net covering of plants is permissible as nature strips are in the public domain and these could create a hazard.

MAINTENANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- Avoid trip hazards from nature strip surface levels, including mulch, adjoining the footpath and kerb to 300mm should be maintained within 40mm height relative to the level of the footpath or kerb.
- Plant material must be maintained within the area of the nature strip and not become unsightly.
- Residents are to keep nature strips free of litter.

- Dead plants, seed heads and weeds should be removed regularly to keep the site tidy (this is particularly critical with productive gardens to remove harbours for pests and diseases and stop potential seed dispersal).

Council's No Spray Register

If you do not want spraying of chemically-based herbicide to occur outside your property, you can choose to be included in Council's 'No Spray' register.

Email Council's Open Space team to register openspace@moreland.vic.gov.au Provide your name and residential street address and you will receive confirmation of registration providing further details about the service.

A renewal notice is sent every year so residents can advise if they wish to continue or be taken off the 'No Spray' register.

As Council needs to maintain our city and streets in a clean and relatively weed-free state, residents included in the 'No Spray' register agree to manage weeds in the footpath and on the kerb and channel in front of and next to their property (and where applicable on their rear lane), by hand-weeding or using their own environmentally-safe product.

PLANNING

A few basic planning steps are helpful before you start planting up your nature strip.

- Talk to your neighbours to explain what you are planning to do and ask if they are interested to be involved or have any advice.
- Walk around your neighbourhood learning what plants are successful in growing in similar conditions to your nature strip.
- Get a copy of Council's Sustainable Gardening booklet or visit our website: <http://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/environment-bins/environment/sustainable-gardening/>
- Try drawing up a simple sketch that details the site including:
 - Property boundaries
 - Footpath and driveways
 - Existing street tree
 - Proposed planting
 - List what plants and how many will be planted per m²

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

While the cost of establishment, maintenance and renewal of the planting is borne by the resident or landowner, Council hopes this guide will help save you both time and money.

Council and service authorities reserve the right to access existing and future infrastructure assets that may be located in and around your nature strip. Services, such as gas, power, communications, stormwater, sewer and water are often located in the nature strip, so be aware that your beautified vegetation could be dug up with little or no warning. While service authorities and Council will reinstate the nature strip to a neat finish only, no plants will be replaced following any disturbance resulting from access works. Additional costs incurred to reinstate the planting will be borne by the resident or landowner.

Residents will be required by Council to remove any inappropriate or inadequately maintained (unsightly) nature strip landscaping.

Council has the right to remove any landscape considered inappropriate based upon a Council Safety Audit.