



Nature Strip Guidelines General Local Law 2021

Introduction

Nature strips play an important role within the City of Greater Dandenong by providing a green zone between the road or footpath, and the adjacent property. Nature strips provide space for key services such as water, gas and above and below ground power. Nature strips also allow for the infiltration of rainwater and air into the soil. This improves the health of the soil and promotes healthy growth of street trees while reducing the volume of stormwater runoff and pollution entering nearby drains and waterways.

Nature strips planted with low growing indigenous and native plants can provide opportunities to support and enhance local biodiversity. This is particularly relevant in streets which form 'stepping stone connections' to natural bushland areas and local waterways.

Council is required to provide a safe environment to all, and minimise potential risks associated with landscaping nature strips. Council is, however, willing to work with residents and property owners who are considering alternative treatments to traditional grassed nature strips.

These guidelines (which are the "City of Greater Dandenong Nature Strip Guidelines" for the purposes of Local Law No. 2) outline the roles and benefits nature strips provide and give guidance to residents considering alternative landscape treatments to the traditional fully-grassed nature strips. Residents and or property owners are required to adhere to these guidelines when undertaking any modification to the nature strip. Residents and/or property owners may require a permit prior to commencement of works. Please direct any enquiry about the need for a permit to Council through the contact details provided below.

These guidelines only apply to roads managed by Council in accordance with the Road Management Act 2004. These roads are commonly referred to as "local" (or "municipal") roads. Council's road register identifies which roads are local roads. The road register is available on Council's website.

Definition

The nature strip can be defined as the area of road reserve between the property boundary and the back of kerb or gutter. The land is set aside for several purposes including providing space for:

- infrastructure services, such as water, sewer, gas, telephone, drainage, street lighting, bus stops, street signage and above and below ground power lines.
- vehicle crossovers and footpaths for the safe movement of pedestrians, prams and mobility aids.
- the placement of waste and recycling bins.
- people to safely get into and out of motor vehicles.

- the planting and establishment of street trees by Council.

Nature strips also need to ensure there is a clear line of sight for the safe movement of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle traffic along and across the road corridor, including at driveways, corners and intersections.

Who is responsible for maintaining the nature strip?

Residents / Property Owners

- Council relies on the established community expectation that residents will maintain nature strips to provide a neat and tidy street frontage. This includes litter removal, removal of leaf litter and tree debris, mowing and the trimming of grass from the footpath and kerb or gutter.
- If the nature strip (and every asset that is contained within it) has been damaged or impacted by building works on private property, the builder or property owner is responsible for the repair and reinstatement of the nature strip and associated assets back to standard conditions. For nature strips, for example, this includes levelling and top dressing with soil and grass seed. Residents are encouraged to water and establish the grass seed.

Greater Dandenong Council

- Council may require access to the nature strip to perform works or conduct inspections of above or below ground assets under its management.
- While Council is the responsible authority, it does not undertake any renovation or maintenance (including mowing and watering) of nature strips unless there is a risk to public safety.
- Council will not replace or reimburse residents for loss of plants or landscaping because of infrastructure repairs and improvement works.
- Council may install infrastructure (such as footpaths) within the road reserve at any time. Council is willing to work with the community to minimise the impact on nature strip landscaping.

Utility Authorities

- Apart from Council, Utility authorities such as South East Water and electricity providers may require access to the nature strip to inspect, repair or replace services and or infrastructure.
- Upon completion of these works the utility authority is responsible for the reinstatement of the nature strip to standard conditions. This includes levelling and top dressing with soil and grass seed. Residents are encouraged to water and establish the grass seed.
- No reimbursement will be provided to residents by Council should any infrastructure repair works or street tree pruning and removal works negatively

impact nature strip landscaping.

Street Trees

- Residents are not permitted to plant, prune or remove nature strip trees.
- Council plants, prunes and maintains all street trees in accordance with relevant maintenance specifications and management plans.
- Street trees are inspected on a two-year cycle and are pruned if required to provide clearances and to meet legislative requirements.
- Street trees are planted at regular intervals along the street at a density that will provide a sense of continuity and scale. Where possible, at least one tree will be planted in front of each property throughout the City.
- Residents are encouraged to support the health and vigour of new and existing street trees by watering the street trees regularly during the warmer months.
- To enquire about street trees or to request a new street tree, please contact Customer Service on 8571 1000 or via email at council@cgd.vic.gov.au

Nature strip guidelines

Before you get started

Underground services are to be located prior to any work commencing. Call 'Dial before you dig' on 1100 to identify service locations.

Locating services prior to commencing work is essential. Failure to locate services can result in serious injury or death and can cause major disruption. The costs of repairs to damaged underground services as result of nature strip landscaping will be borne by the resident.

Residents and/or property owners can only undertake landscaping works on the nature strip directly in front of their property. It should be borne in mind that safe public access is required (eg to enable car doors to be easily opened) and that waste and recycle bins must be capable of being easily placed on and removed from the nature strip.

Street trees play an important role in providing habitat and shade and reducing daytime surface temperatures. Landscaping cannot negatively impact the health and vigour of the street tree. Soil disturbance should be minimised by using hand tools to avoid damaging the root system. The mounding of mulch and ground cover plantings up around the base of street trees should also be avoided.

Nature strips can be landscaped to achieve the following:

1. Grassed nature strip.
2. Native grass nature strip.
3. Planting with low growing ground covers.

What's permitted?

1. Grassed nature strip

Grassed nature strips are the most common form of nature strip treatment throughout the City. The use of drought tolerant warm season grasses, such as Kikuyu, Couch and Soft Leaf Buffalo varieties, provide a low maintenance treatment once established, requiring little to no watering while remaining in good health and condition.

2. Native Grass nature strip

The use of native grasses can provide a lawn like appearance, are drought tolerant and low maintenance and only require periodic weeding and mowing. The species recommended for planting below are indigenous to the area and play an important role in maintaining and enhancing local biodiversity.

- Knead Wallaby Grass (*Rytidosperma geniculata*)
- Clustered Wallaby Grass (*Rytidosperma racemosa*)
- Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*)
- Browns Lovegrass (*Eragrostis brownii*)

3. Planting with ground covers

The use of native ground covers, wildflowers, low growing shrubs and grasses in a mulched nature strip can provide an aesthetically pleasing alternative to grass when regularly maintained. Planting nature strips with native and indigenous plants can increase biodiversity by providing essential habitat for native birds, insects and lizards.

When planting nature strips with low growing ground covers the following requirements must be met:

- Plants must not exceed 500mm in height and must be maintained to a maximum height 500mm.
- Plantings must be set back a minimum of 600mm from the kerb to allow car doors to open and passengers to safely step out of a car.
- Nature strips on corner properties are restricted to low growing ground cover plantings only.
- Plants and mulch are to be regularly maintained and cannot encroach on the footpath, kerb or gutter.
- Plantings must allow for the placement of garbage and recycled bins.
- Fire hydrants, plugs and service pits must be kept clear and accessible for relevant authorities at all times.

Private gardens and nature strips can provide an opportunity to support local plants and animals. In particular, planting native and indigenous plants can assist in creating

important 'stepping stone connections' to bushland reserves and waterways. These 'connections' can provide valuable habitat links for birds, insects and lizards. Council's 'Growing Biodiversity' booklet provides advice and references on sustainable gardening and growing biodiversity. A suggested plant list is provided in Appendix One.

What's not permitted?

To comply with these guidelines, the following landscape treatments are not permitted:

- Rocks, timber, sleepers, retaining walls, bollards, pavers, wooden stakes, star pickets, ornaments, letter boxes or any other non-frangible objects or structures.
- Materials such as straw, plastic, stones or pebbles, scoria, or blue metal.
- Irrigation systems
- Synthetic or artificial grass
- Artificial or plastic plants
- Electrical wiring to support lights on a nature strip
- Concrete or asphalt
- Prickly, spiky or poisonous plants
- Environmental weed species
- Herbicide application to permanently retain a nature strip devoid of grass or vegetation
- Allowance for car parking on nature strip.
- Altering the natural level of the nature strip through mounding of soil or other loose materials

Modifications will not be permitted to the following:

- water sensitive urban design (WSUD) installations and/or drainage features such as raingardens.
- garden beds installed by Council and or a developer

Residents and/or property owners seeking to install items or treatments either listed or not listed within the guidelines can contact Council's Parks Department on (03) 8571 1000 for consideration and approval.

Existing landscaped nature strips

Changes may be required to nature strips that have already been landscaped. This is required to ensure they meet the requirements of these guidelines. In discussions with Council, any changes to existing landscaped nature strips will be undertaken by the

resident or property owner.

Managing risk and safety issues

Council is required to provide a safe environment and minimise potential risks associated with landscaping nature strips. Therefore, Council will respond to public safety issues to minimise the risk to the community. Council will work with the relevant resident or property owner to address safety issues due to nature strip landscaping.

The resident or property owner will be required to remove any landscaping feature identified as an immediate public risk. This includes pedestrian trip or fall hazards, obstructions or other hazards which do not adhere to these guidelines.

If the resident of a property owner fails to address non-compliant landscaping found within a nature strip, an Authorised Officer may issue a “Notice to Comply” requiring the specific problem be fixed by an allocated date. Failure to act following a “Notice to Comply” can result in an on-the-spot fine (in the form of an infringement notice). It is also possible that Council will take action in the Magistrates' Court by prosecuting the resident or property owner.

Contact

For further information or guidance regarding alternative nature strip treatments, please contact Council's Parks Department on (03) 8571 1000.

References and advice

Growing Biodiversity www.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/biodiversity-nature-and-wildlife/growing-biodiversity

Greening Our City Urban Tree Strategy www.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/greening-our-city-urban-tree-strategy

City of greater Dandenong Road Management Plan
www.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/road-management-plan

City of Greater Dandenong Road Register
www.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/integrated-transport/road-register

Indigenous Plant Nurseries

Greenlink Sandbelt Nursery 587 Heatherton Rd, Clayton South 3169 Tel: 9551 3039
www.greenlinksandbelt.org.au

Carrum Indigenous Nursery Inc. Learmonth Reserve, Cnr Learmonth and Thompson Rds, Patterson Lakes 3197 Tel: 9776 0823 www.carrumindigenousnursery.com.au

Friends of Braeside Park Nursery 370 Lower Dandenong Rd, Braeside 3195 Tel: 9265 7300 www.braesideparkfriends.org.au

Useful websites

Sustainable Gardening Australia www.sgaonline.org.au

Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association www.iffa.org.au Australian Plant Society

Victoria www.apsvic.org.au Weeds Australia www.weeds.org.au

Appendices

Appendix One - Suggested plant list

Form	Botanical name	Common name
Grasses	<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>	Weeping Grass
	<i>Rytidosperma setaceum</i>	Bristly Wallaby Grass
	<i>Rytidosperma geniculatum</i>	Knead Wallaby Grass
	<i>Rytidosperma caespitosa</i>	Common Wallaby Grass
	<i>Rytidosperma racemosa</i>	Slender Wallaby Grass
	<i>Themeda triandra</i>	Kangaroo Grass
	<i>Poa sieberiana</i>	Grey Tussock-grass
	<i>Austrostipa mollis</i>	Supple Spear-grass
	<i>Eragrostis brownii</i>	Common Love-grass
	<i>Dichelachne crinata</i>	Long-hair Plume-grass
Tufted perennial herbs	<i>Dianella brevicaulis</i>	
	<i>Dianella revoluta</i>	Black-anther Flax-lily
	<i>Patersonia occidentalis</i>	Long Purple-flag, Native Iris
Wildflowers	<i>Calocephalus citreus</i>	Lemon Beauty Heads
	<i>Calocephalus lacteus</i>	Milky Beauty Heads
	<i>Chrysocephalum apiculatum</i>	Common Everlasting
	<i>Wahlenbergia communis</i>	Tufted Bluebell
	<i>Pelargonium australe</i>	Austral Stork's-bill
	<i>Craspedia canens</i>	Grey Billy-buttons
	<i>Arthropodium strictum</i>	Chocolate Lily
	<i>Bulbine bulbosa</i>	Bulbine Lillies
	<i>Stylidium graminifolium</i>	Trigger Plants
	<i>Hibbertia fasciculata</i> var. <i>prostrata</i>	<i>Hibbertia fasciculata</i> var. <i>prostrata</i>
	<i>Brachyscome multifida</i>	Cut-leafed Daisy
Groundcovers	<i>Dichondra repens</i>	Kidney-weed
	<i>Einadia nutans</i>	Ruby Saltbush
	<i>Billardiera mutabilis</i>	Common Apple-berry
	<i>Kennedia prostrata</i>	Running Postman
	<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i>	Puple Coral Pea