

Nature strip planting guidelines

Frankston City Council

October 2022

Lifestyle Capital of Victoria



Nature strips create local character, wildlife habitat and contribute to our city's social health and support many essential functions. To apply for a permit to plant on your nature strip, follow the requirements detailed in this document.

What is a nature strip?

The nature strip is the area of public land between the property boundary and the road kerb/shoulder and it does not include the footpath, kerb or driveway.

The *Road Management Act 2004* and the *Road Safety Act 1986* consider the nature strip to be part of the road reserve. They need to maintain safe visibility for pedestrians, vehicles and cyclists especially at intersections and driveways.

Nature strips have many essential functions such as:

- Provide a buffer between the private residence and the public roadway.
- Provide services; such as telephone, gas, water, NBN, sewerage, and electricity and light posts.
- Location for household rubbish, recycling and green bins.
- Safe access for postal and service maintenance staff.
- Safe access for passengers (including prams and wheelchairs) to parked vehicles.
- Provide locations for public bus stops.

What are the benefits of a nature strip?

Nature strips offer a range of environmental and social benefits and help create a safer, more attractive and healthier environments for people to live and work within. They provide space for canopy trees that improve the amenity and walkability of our streets. Canopy trees also help to cool urban areas in the warmer months. Well maintained nature strips create local character, which benefits property owners and businesses.

Nature strips planted with local species provide shelter and food for local wildlife and can act as important green corridors linking natural reserves to help wildlife move across the landscape.

This grass area allows air and rainwater to be absorbed into the soil which improves soil condition, promoting the healthy growth of street trees. It also reduces the amount of storm water runoff and pollution entering our waterways.

Who is responsible for maintaining nature strips?

Frankston City residents

Council recognises and encourages the contribution of residents and the important role that they play in providing basic maintenance of nature strips, such as mowing or sweeping. All other works, in the roadway, nature strip or footpath requires the approval of Council under an Asset Protection Permit.

For further information refer to:

<https://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Planning-and-Building/Roads-and-Infrastructure/Infrastructure-permits-and-applications/Apply-for-an-asset-protection-permit>

Frankston City Council

Council is the responsible authority of all nature strips within the municipality, however there is an expectation that residents will maintain nature strips to present a neat and tidy street frontage.

Council does not carry out maintenance such as mowing or herbicide application where a nature strip adjoins a private property. We will take the necessary steps to remediate any hazards that pose a risk to public safety on a nature strip.

Council plants, prunes and maintains all street trees but residents are encouraged to help support the health of street trees by watering trees on their nature strips, especially in dry conditions. (Refer to 'What about Street Trees?').

Service Authorities

Nature strips often contain underground services such as drainage, gas, NBN, etc. which may need upgrading or repair or by the relevant Service Authority and the installation of new services may also be required. Service Authorities have a statutory right to use the road reserve to provide these services for the community.

Plants installed by the resident may be removed by the Service Authority in order to access the underground infrastructure. The Service Authority is only required to reinstate the nature strip to normal conditions, such as filling holes and sowing with grass seed.



What about street trees?

Council plants, prunes and maintains all street trees and residents are not permitted to plant, prune or remove street trees. This is due to the complexities of street tree species selection, ongoing maintenance requirements and the risk of damage to essential services. We are also responsible for pruning street trees under relevant maintenance specifications and has allocated budgets for these operations.

When planting beneath an existing street tree, it is important to avoid damage to sensitive tree roots by using hand tools to dig planting holes and avoid planting within 500mm of the trunk of street trees. Select alternative locations for plants to avoid damage to any significant roots (>30mm).



To request a street tree, please contact Council on 1300 322 322 or via

<https://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Environment-and-Waste/Environment/Trees>

What options are available for planting on nature strips?

Mown grass nature strips are the most common form of nature strip treatment in Frankston City. They provide a low maintenance nature strip and are compatible with other purposes of nature strips.

An alternative to grass is a planted and mulched nature strip which provides a soft and visually pleasing alternative when it is well maintained.

This treatment involves the use of the nature strip as a garden bed with it being planted with low growing (preferably indigenous or native) plants and mulched. This is often done to create a wildlife friendly extension of the home garden and remove the need to mow the area.

Council supports appropriate plantings on the nature strip as long as access for essential services and public safety can be maintained.

Any costs associated with planting and ongoing maintenance of nature strip improvements is the responsibility of the resident.

When an alternative approach is undertaken, the treatment must still allow for the safe passage of pedestrians and clear visibility as specified within the checklist below (refer to 'When is a permit required?').

Council requirement checklist

- If there is no existing concrete footpath, a minimum width of 1.5m is to be kept clear to allow for pedestrians.
- No plantings taller than 25mm are to occur within 600mm of the roadway kerb, to allow access to and from vehicles. This area may be mulched, mown lawn or groundcover plants that can withstand foot traffic.
- Plants are to be maintained at or below a height of 500mm (excluding 600mm clearance area from the kerb) to maintain visibility for the safety of pedestrians and road users.
- Hard landscaping elements such as rocks, timber, retaining walls, and ornaments must not be used due to possible hazards to the public.
- Only organic mulches may be used. Mulch must be kept stable and contained within the nature strip. Mulch materials larger than 25mm must not be used. No dyed mulches should be used.
- Avoid planting within 500mm of street trees, to minimise risk of damaging roots
- Plantings must not obscure or restrict access to existing infrastructure such as service pits, power poles and water valves. In particular there must be no obstruction of fire hydrants and fire plugs.
- Service authority asset location must be obtained prior to any planting. This can be easily obtained from Before You Dig <https://www.byda.com.au/>
- No digging beyond what is required to remove existing weeds or install plant stock is allowed (hand tools only, no mechanical excavation permitted).

Before approval is sought, contact Before You Dig at www.byda.com.au to determine the location of underground services within the nature strip area.

Care must be taken when working near services to prevent personal injury. Any damage and resulting costs incurred to services caused by works remain the responsibility of the permit holder.

Plant selection

Indigenous or native species are preferred as they are often the most drought resistant, low maintenance options, and provide biodiversity benefits. No planting of environmental weeds is to occur.

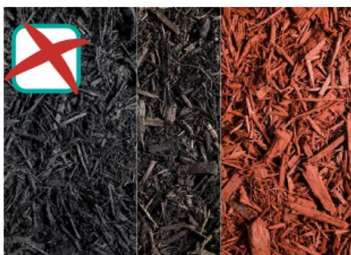
When selecting plants, consider their hardiness and if they are easy to maintain, as nature strips often have harsh growing conditions. Plants with a mature height less than 500mm will require less frequent pruning.

Avoid selecting species which are spiky or could otherwise cause harm to members of the public.

Preparing for planting

Take the following into consideration when preparing your nature strip for planting;

- Remove existing grasses/weeds with the use of herbicides (follow manufactures directions) or by preferred manual methods such as hand pulling, scalping with a lawn mower or using hand tools.
- No machinery (other than a domestic lawn mower) are to be used and avoid working within 600mm of any street trees.
- Mulch with organic mulches such as ‘arborist’ or ‘bush’ mulch. This mulch can be found at garden centers or contacting a local arborists (take care not to introduce weed seeds into the site).
- Mulch is a great way to protect soil and suppress weed growth. It is best to lay mulch before planting, as it easier to plant into, rather than spread after planting.
- Do not use dyed mulches as they can leach dyes and other chemicals into the soil profile.



When is a permit required?

A permit is required if you wish to modify the nature strip from the standard ‘mown lawn’ nature strip.

These guidelines outline what is permitted to be undertaken on your nature strip to achieve a permit.

No permit is required re-establish a poor performing nature strip with lawn. Consider alternative native grass species, such as Wallaby Grass (*Rytidosperma* spp.) and Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*), which are drought resistant and provide biodiversity benefits.

Why do I need a permit?

Council has a duty of care to provide a safe environment and the nature strip is public land, which requires Council avoid the creation of hazards, such as vegetation blocking visibility for traffic and pedestrians or inappropriate objects located within the nature strip (e.g. rocks, built structures)

Nature strips also contain infrastructure which must be protected and could be damaged if inappropriate treatments, such as excessive excavation, inappropriate plantings etc. occur.

*There is **NO** cost to apply for a nature strip planting permit, but permit applications must comply with these guidelines and ongoing maintenance requirements.*

Council reserves the right to grant or refuse any permit application.

How do I get a permit?

Prior to undertaking any works to the nature strip. An application for 'Permit to plant within a nature strip' must be made to Council detailing the following:

- Property owner name and contact details.
- Property address.

Applications can be made online or completed and submitted to info@frankston.vic.gov.au or any customer service centre.

Alterations to nature strips (including any works) are not to occur until written approval has been provided by Council.

What are my maintenance Responsibilities?

Following the beautification of a nature strip, residents must keep the nature strip in a well maintained and safe condition including:

- Plants must be pruned to ensure they do not exceed a height of more than 500mm to ensure no sight line issues are caused for vehicle traffic.
- Plants are to be pruned so that they do not protrude onto pathways, driveways or back of kerb and maintain specified front buffer zones of 600mm.
- Council planted street trees are not to be pruned or lopped by property owners, all maintenance of street trees will be carried out by Council.
- The nature strip is to be kept free of weeds and rubbish.
- Mulch is to be maintained over the nature strip. Mulch material must be kept stable and properly contained and no mulch spillage is

allowed on the footpath, driveways or in the kerb and channel.

- The nature strip is to be free of any tripping hazards and any protruding objects.

What if I undertake works that don't meet the requirement of these Guidelines?

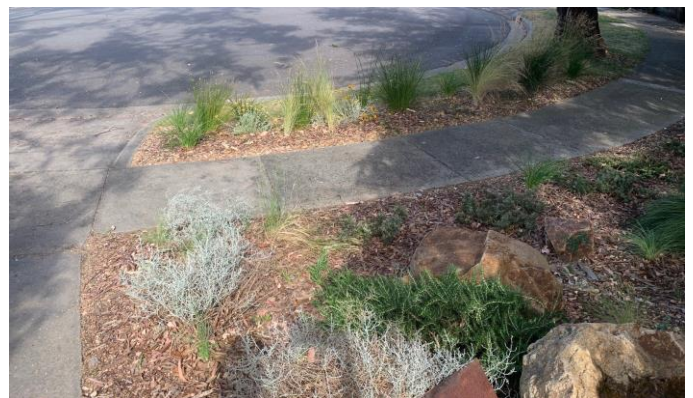
Council has the authority to remove any plantings or works that impact on the safety of the public or public services. The property owner will be informed by Council and have the opportunity to amend the issue before Council initiates any rectification works.

If the property owner fails to act, a delegated Council Officer will issue a 'Notice to Comply', directing that any matters identified must be fixed to Council's satisfaction by a specific date. Failure to act in accordance with a 'Notice to Comply' may result in enforcement action.

Council's Community Local Law requires that;

A person must not without a permit:

- (a) plant or remove vegetation from a nature strip or undertake any landscaping on a nature strip, road or municipal place; or*
- (b) remove soil from a nature strip, road or municipal place.'*



What if I move or sell the associated property?

In the event that a permit holder moves from or sells the property associated with a nature strip planting permit, it is the responsibility of the original permit applicant to either:

- Contact Council with consent of the new owner to reissue the permit to the new property owners.
- Continue to maintain the nature strip (in the event the owner tenants the property) or;
- Ensure that the nature strip is returned to its original condition.

This is to ensure that the new resident is aware of the ongoing maintenance obligations of nature strip plantings.

What works are not permitted within a nature strip?

The following modifications are not permitted on nature strips in urban areas:

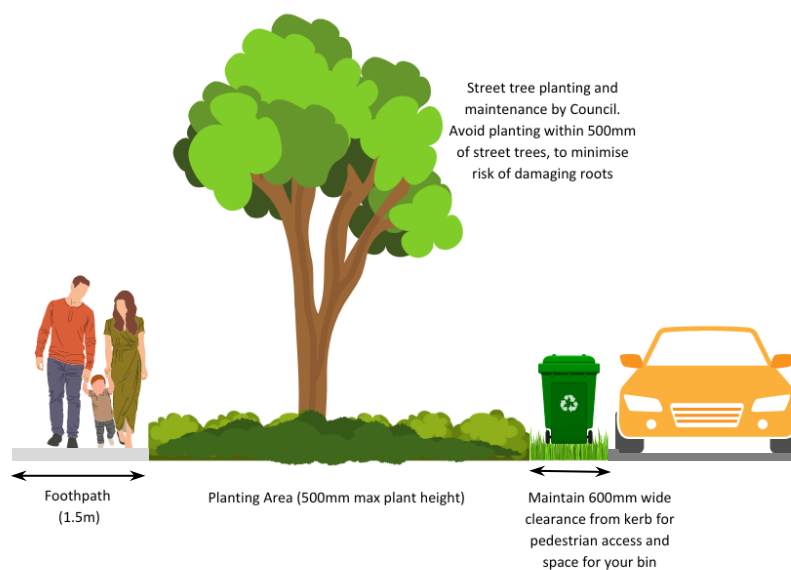
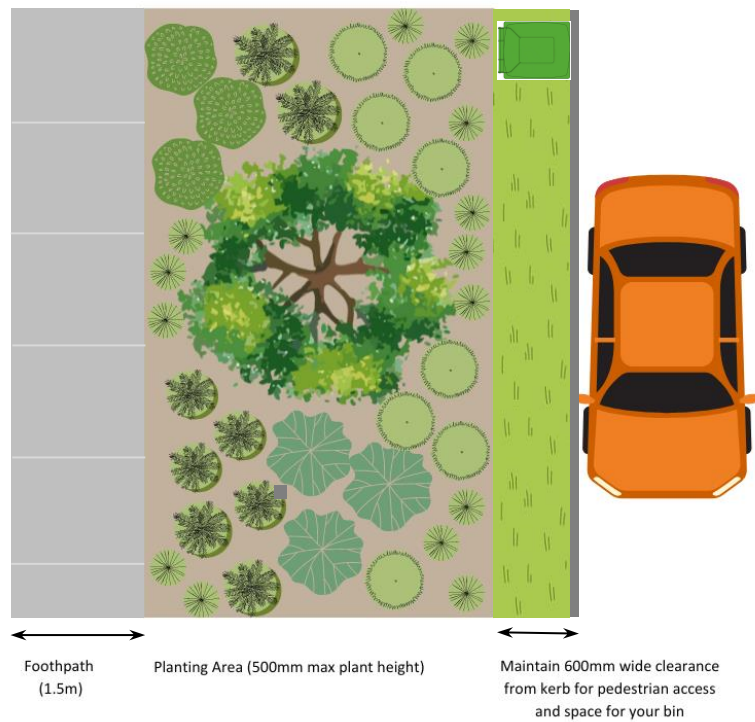
- Irrigation systems.
- Hard landscaping elements such as rocks, bluestone, retaining walls, steel edging, garden stakes, water features, letter boxes or other items deemed to be an obstruction or potential hazard by Council.
- Food gardens - food gardens are not allowed to be planted due to the health risks associated with potential soil contamination and risk to the gardener due to increased exposure to road side hazards as a result of frequent maintenance requirements of food gardens.

Fertilisers and cultivation requirements of growing food plants can have a detrimental impact on the health of street trees and the environment.

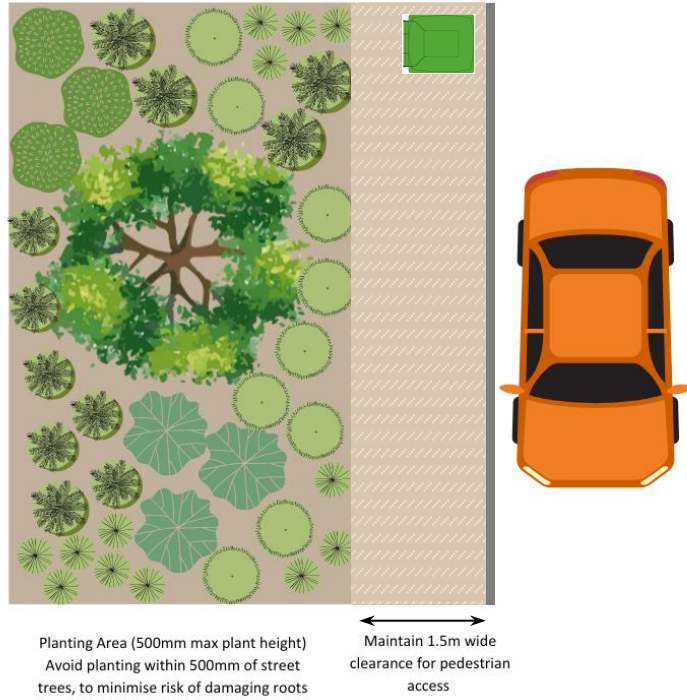
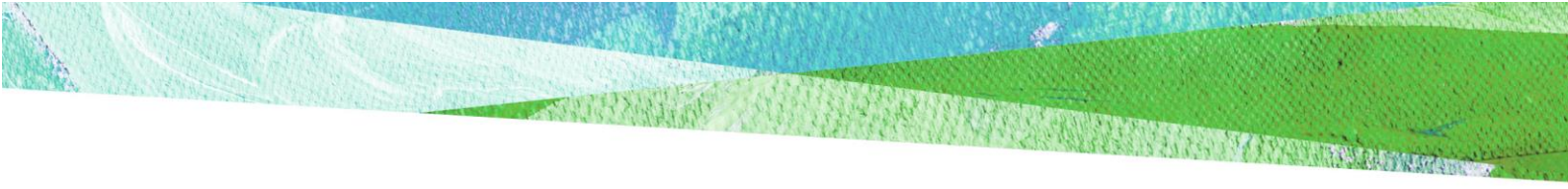
- Modifying existing natural surface levels or drainage.
- No potential or established environmental weeds will be accepted.
- Synthetic grass, weed matting or any other artificial soil covering. The purpose of these guidelines is to enable the conversion of nature strips into gardens, not to reduce maintenance.
- Modification to nature strip to allow parking i.e. designated parking space(s).



Appendix 1 – Design examples



Example of a Nature strip with a 1.5m Footpath



Example of a Nature strip without a Footpath



Appendix 2 - Recommended indigenous plant species

While the species below are recommended, other native species or cultivars may be used, provided that they meet the requirements of these Guidelines. Generally, regular pruning will be required to maintain plantings at the heights set in these guidelines.

Frankston Indigenous Plant booklet is available on Councils website for more information

Grasses, lilies and tussocks

Common Name	Botanical Name
Vanilla lily	<i>Arthropodium milleflorum</i>
Chocolate Lily	<i>Arthropodium strictum</i>
Bulbine	<i>Bulbine bulbosa</i>
Small-flowered Flax-lily	<i>Dianella brevicaulis</i>
Pale Flax-lily	<i>Dianella longiflora var. longiflora</i>
Knobby Club-sedge	<i>Ficinia nodosa</i>
Sword sedge	<i>Lepidosperma concavum</i>
Wattle Mat-rush	<i>Lomandra filiformis</i>
Spiny Mat Rush	<i>Lomandra longifolia</i>
Weeping Grass	<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>
Long Purple-flag	<i>Patersonia occidentalis</i>
Common Tussock Grass	<i>Poa labillardierei</i>
Soft tussock grass	<i>Poa morrisii</i>

Coastal tussock Grass *Poa poiformis*

Wallaby grass *Rytidosperma spp*

Grass Trigger Plant *Stylidium graminifolium*

Kangaroo Grass *Themeda triandra*



Small shrubs

These plants will require more maintenance to remain within heights set within guidelines.

Common Name	Botanical Name
Coast or Grey Saltbush	<i>Atriplex cinerea</i>
Showy Bossiaea	<i>Bossiaea cinerea</i>
White Correa **try the compacta cultivar	<i>Correa alba</i>
Common Correa **try a smaller cultivar e.g. Jetty Red/nummularifolia	<i>Correa reflexa</i>
Common Heath	<i>Epacris impressa</i>
Hop Goodenia **try a smaller cultivar e.g. Edna Walling	<i>Goodenia ovata</i>
Silky Guinea-flower	<i>Hibbertia sericea</i>
Silky tea tree ** keep well pruned	<i>Leptospermum myrsinoides</i>
Cushion Bush **Keep well pruned or try Silver Nugget cultivar	<i>Leucophyta brownii</i>
Common Beard-heath	<i>Leucopogon virgatus</i>
Golden Bush-pea	<i>Pultenaea gunnii</i>



Ground covers/ Climbers

These plants will stay within the heights set in guidelines, but will still require some maintenance. Climbers will act as vigorous ground covers (when nothing is present to climb).

Common Name	Botanical Name
Common Apple-berry	<i>Billardiera mutabilis</i>
Coast Daisy	<i>Brachycome parvula</i>
Karkalla	<i>Carpobrotus rossii</i>
Common everlasting	<i>Chrysocephalum apiculatum</i>
Small-leaved Clematis	<i>Clematis microphylla</i> var. <i>microphylla</i>
Button everlasting	<i>Coronidium scorpioides</i>
Kidney Weed	<i>Dichondra repens</i>
Noon flower	<i>Disphmya crassifolium</i>
Nodding Saltbush	<i>Einadia nutans</i>
Running postman	<i>Kennedia prostrata</i>
Austral Stork's Bill	<i>Pelargonium australe</i>
Common Rice flower	<i>Pimelea humilis</i>
Bower Spinach	<i>Tetragonia implexicoma</i>
Native Violet	<i>Viola hederacea</i>
Tall Bluebell	<i>Wahlenbergia stricta</i>

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