

# Nature Strip Landscaping Guidelines

## Purpose

The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide guidance on landscape treatment options that could be applied to nature strips, to ensure a safe, sustainable and consistent approach to the design and selection of materials used on nature strips throughout the City of Moonee Valley.

## Introduction

A nature strip is publicly owned land between the boundary of a house or other building and the street, excluding the paved footpath area.

Nature strips contribute significantly to the character of Moonee Valley’s neighbourhoods. Whilst most nature strips are planted with grass, property owners and/or tenants are able to replace grass with other plants to contribute to habitat and attractiveness of their street. Landscaped nature strips in Moonee Valley must comply with these guidelines to maintain safety and amenity for the community.

## Plants and vegetation permitted on nature strips

Property owners and/or tenants are able to plant the nature strip abutting their property with a range of groundcover plants, shrubs and grasses.

The vegetation must be maintained and pruned, and not reach greater than 1 metre (m) in height in the central part of the nature strip, and no greater than 0.5m in height on the edges of the planting area planting.

A mix of heights will generally be more attractive than a bulk of bushes at the same height and can be useful for providing a range of different habitat types.

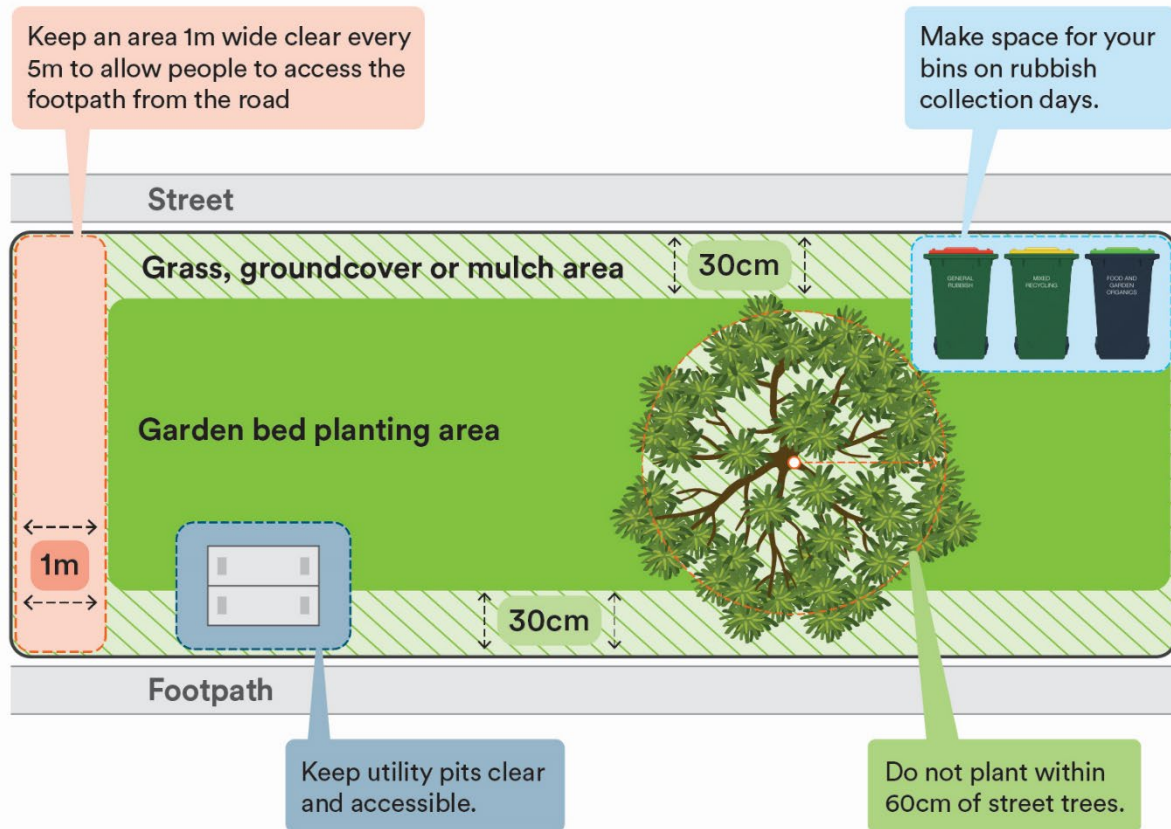
Keep an area 1m wide clear of plants every 5m (every car space), to allow people to access the footpath from the kerb

Plant heights need to be lower in nature strips where it is adjacent to an intersection - see Table 1. Clear areas are required beside the kerb and/or footpath, around utilities and trees – see Figure 1 for details. Note that low growing plants, such as grass and groundcovers, or mulch, can be used in offset and clear areas.

*Table 1 - Plant height limits for nature strips adjacent to road intersections*

Location	Plant height permitted
Within 9m of intersection on a street with 50km/h or lower speed limit	0.3m
Within 12m of intersection on a street with 60km/h speed limit	0.3m
Within 15m of intersection on a street with greater than 60km/h speed limit	0.3m

Figure 1 – Planting requirements



Other considerations for planting:

- Council has [Nature Strip Landscaping Suitable Plants](#) guidance for further advice on what species are preferred and what to avoid.
- Plants with spikes or prickles, or plants considered noxious weeds, cannot be used.
- Soil contamination (e.g. lead) is a common problem in urban areas. Property owners and/ or tenants are advised to test their nature strip before growing food plants.
- Property owners and/ or tenants cannot plant trees on nature strips. If the nature strip does not have a street tree and the property owner would like one, they need to contact Council so it can be considered. Council is responsible for planting and maintaining street trees. These trees are carefully selected to provide habitat for native fauna as well as shade. Property owners and/ or tenants can help the street tree flourish by watering it regularly. Only Council can remove or prune street trees.

## Organic mulch

Mulches derived from organic materials can be used as part of landscaped nature strips to support plant growth by protecting soil, reducing moisture loss and suppressing weeds.

## Guidelines

- Organic mulches (those derived from living organisms such as pine bark or wood chips) should be applied to reduce soil disturbance by wind and rain.
- The recommended depth of mulch is approximately 75 millimetres (mm) which allows rainfall to reach the soil while still reducing evaporation and erosion.
- Mulch should not be placed around the base of street trees; to avoid excess water retention and cause rot.
- Groundcover plants with spreading habits can be used to avoid the need for mulch once matured.
- A mulched area can be appropriate as an area kept clear of plants and for kerbside bin collections.
- Stones and pebbles and other inorganic mulches are **not** permitted.

## Excavation and cultivation

- Excavation and cultivation must only be done using hand tools (e.g. trowel, spade, fork). Mechanical excavation or cultivation (e.g. bobcat, dingo or rotary hoe) is not allowed as it may damage street trees, infrastructure and underground services.
- Hand tools may still expose some underground services, so it is advised to contact Dial Before You Dig. The property owner is responsible for pre-site inspections and the repairing of any damage to infrastructure caused by landscaping works.

## Maintenance and damage

- The property owners and/ or tenants are expected to maintain the nature strip adjacent to their property, this includes mowing, weeding, edging and any works required in keeping the nature strip in a safe and tidy condition. Additionally, this includes keeping it free of trip hazards and protruding objects and ensuring pathways, gutters and driveways are free of weeds, rubbish and mulch.
- Council does not carry out renovation or maintenance of nature strips, and is not responsible for reinstating grass after a change in property ownership. Tenants should seek permission from the property owner before making changes to the nature strip as the property owner is ultimately responsible for maintenance of the nature strip.
- Council cannot prevent members of the public from interfering with plants.
- If the nature strip has been damaged as a result of building or other service works, the property owner or builder who caused the damage is responsible for repair.
- Council and utility companies sometimes require nature strip access for maintenance work. If nature strip plantings are disturbed, the service organisation is only responsible for reinstating grass. It is up to the property owner if they wish to restore the nature strip to the desired landscaping.
- The property owners and/ or tenants are responsible for reinstatement costs where there is any impact on council asset, such as a footpath or drainage outlet, as a result of the nature strip planting.

## Guidelines

### Planter boxes

Planter boxes that are raised above ground, or soil filled containers intended for growing produce and other vegetation are permitted on nature strips.

Specifications for planter boxes outlined in Table 2 have been developed with consideration to tripping hazards, road visibility and viewing distance, resistance to tipping by vandals, clearance for signage, street furniture, kerbside bin collections, vehicle access, manoeuvring room for footpath users including those with impaired mobility, access to Council and utility services, and risk to safety.

The colour and material of raised planter boxes are encouraged to be in keeping with the local neighbourhood character.

Should Council or a utility provider (e.g. gas, water or electricity provider) need to access its services within the nature strip, the property owner and/or tenant may be required to remove the planter box prior to commencement of works.

*Table 2 – Guidelines for planter boxes*

Raised Planter Boxes	
Length	• 5m (maximum)
Width	• 1m (maximum)
Height	• 1m (maximum) inclusive of planter box and vegetation
Not allowed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within close proximity to intersections               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 9m (minimum) where there is a 50km/ h or lower speed limit</li> <li>○ 12m (minimum) where there is a 60km/h speed limit</li> <li>○ 15m (minimum) where there is a greater than 60km/h speed limit</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Within half a metre from property boundaries</li> </ul>
Additional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free of splinters and protrusions (e.g. nails, bolt heads, etc.)</li> <li>• At least 1m between raised planter boxes</li> </ul>

### Prohibitions

The following are not permitted on nature strips:

- Hard surfaces such as concrete, paving or asphalt.
- Private footpaths from the property boundary through the nature strip to the footpath, other than for exceptional circumstances (such as properties without a vehicle crossover to a street, or existing sloped non-compliant nature strips) at the discretion of the responsible authority (Council).
- Planter boxes that do not meet the specifications in these guidelines.
- Bluestone blocks, bricks, rocks, railway sleepers, edging, retaining walls (other than those located in existing sloped nature strips that are being maintained to the satisfaction of the responsible authority), statues, signs, garden stakes, basketball hoops, and seating.
- Letterboxes (these must be on private property).
- Temporary or permanent electrical wiring (e.g. tree lighting).
- Irrigation systems and water features.
- Fencing other than temporary fencing approved by the responsible authority (tree protection, Road Occupancy, or the like).

## Guidelines

- Synthetic turf, pebbles, scoria, gravel and other loose stones.
- Landscaping elements and treatments that do not allow for the efficient and safe use of road and/or footpath. This includes plantings and treatments that could impede the maintenance of services, including planting in open drains or changes to the gradient of the land, as the latter may exacerbate flooding.

It is also prohibited to interfere with:

- Council's street tree watering or water sensitive urban design (WSUD) systems.
- A tree pit (point of difference to nature strip) or introducing a raised garden bed/ planter box around an existing tree.

Where a prohibited treatment has been installed, Council has the authority to contact the property owner and/or tenant to remedy the matter. If not resolved, Council may issue a 'Notice to Comply'. Failure to meet the conditions of such a Notice within the given time (usually 14 days) may result in the likes of compliance works authorised by Council, at cost to the property owner.

Where a treatment poses an immediate safety risk or seriously affects traffic, Council is obligated to take immediate action and arrange for compliance works. This can occur without issuing a 'Notice to Comply', and at the cost of the property owner.

### Existing sloped non-compliant nature strips

Nature strip gardening will generally occur on flat spaces, however there are a number of locations throughout the municipality where properties with sloped sites have been developed with landscaping, retaining walls, and other assets accommodated within the nature strip area.

Although some of these sites are not compliant with these Nature Strip Landscaping Guidelines, because they include retaining walls and other assets, remedying these outside of the site being redeveloped may represent significant burden. As such, if a property already has a nature strip with retaining walls and other such assets, they can be kept, however they must be maintained to the satisfaction of Council, with no new non-compliant assets to be accommodated.

In instances where there are non-compliant assets in the nature strip area, and the site is being redeveloped, it will be at the discretion of the responsible authority whether they should be maintained to the satisfaction of the responsible authority or made compliant.

### Changing built form

When an apartment building is built within an activity centre or location undergoing significant change, the developer or owner's corporation may engage with Council as to whether there is a preferred future streetscape treatment that may be applied to the current nature strip, and or for guidance on low maintenance planting treatments in keeping with these guidelines.

## Guidelines

### Resources

- Moonee Valley City Council | Phone: 03 9243 8888
- Email: [council@mvcc.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@mvcc.vic.gov.au)
- My Smart Garden | Website: [mysmartgarden.org.au](http://mysmartgarden.org.au)
- Before You Dig Australia | Website: <https://www.byda.com.au/>

### Related Council Documents

- [Open Space Strategy](#)
- [Nature Strip Landscaping Suitable Plants](#)

<b>Owner</b>	Manager City Futures		<b>Approved</b>	28 November 2023	
<b>Version</b>	1.0	<b>Last Reviewed</b>	14 November 2023	<b>Next Review</b>	28 November 2025

#### Document control disclaimer

Minor amendments to this document may be required from time to time. Where amendments don't materially alter a document, they will be made administratively, without a requirement for formal approval. Printed copies of this document are considered uncontrolled. Printed copies of this document are considered uncontrolled.