Maribyrnong
CITY COUNCIL

PROJECT REPORT

Nature Strip Planting Guidelines

AUGUST 2025

Acknowledgment of Country

Maribyrnong City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong Peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

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1. Nature Strip Planting

1.1. Introduction

Maribyrnong City Council has developed these Nature Strip Planting Guidelines (Guidelines) to provide the framework for residents who wish to plant and maintain an alternative to a grass nature strip in a way that is not detrimental to local amenity and ensures roads and footpaths remain safe and accessible.

The Guidelines support the implementation of Council's Nature Strip Planting Policy.

The key principles of the Nature Strip Planting Policy are that:

- Nature strips contribute to a healthy environment for people, plants, animals and waterways.
- Nature strips accommodate essential services for the community.
- Nature strips need to be safe and accessible spaces.

The Policy intends to achieve a balance between the benefits that well-maintained nature strips provide to the urban environment with recognition that any risks that could arise as a result of landscaping on public land need to be managed appropriately.

1.2. Purpose

The Guidelines provide direction on how to plan and deliver your planted nature strip, constraints you must abide by, and your responsibilities for maintaining the nature strip.

1.3. Definitions

Guidelines	Nature Strip Planting Guidelines
Policy	Nature Strip Planting Policy
Indigenous	Occurs naturally in the local area
Native	Occurs naturally somewhere in Australia
Exotic	Introduced species that did not occur naturally in Australia

1.4. What is a nature strip?

Nature strips are the areas of public land within a road reserve that are located between the edge of the road or back of the kerb and the property boundary, that are not occupied by the footpath and private road crossings. In accordance with the Road Management Act 2004 Council as the Responsible Road Authority is responsible for managing nature strips.

Nature strips are typically a strip of grass with a tree planted in it and provide valuable green spaces in urban areas. They also accommodate underground services, provide a space for the collection of waste bins and need to be safe and accessible for road users and pedestrians at all times.

The regular maintenance and upkeep of nature strips is undertaken by the resident living in the property that abuts each one. This involves mowing, weeding, trimming edges and picking up litter. The exception to this are street trees as these are planted and maintained by Council.

1.5. Planting details

Council recognises that there are a range of environmental and social benefits from having a planted nature strip.

Residents have the option to plan, create and maintain their nature strip in accordance with these Guidelines. The nature strip may include ground cover plants, low growing shrubs, herbs and vegetables if they would prefer any of these instead of grass.

Council encourages the use of indigenous plant species in any gardening – on the nature strip, in the front yard, and in the back yard. Indigenous species support local ecosystems better than native and non-native alternatives and help to promote greater local biodiversity.

A list of suggested ground cover and shrub species suitable for nature strip planting is included in Appendix A.

Other plants may be considered suitable, however Council will not permit the use of:

- prickly or spiky plants
- shrubs which grow higher than 50cm; and
- weed species (see 1.6 Weed Species)

1.6. Weed species

Some plants are not suitable for nature strip planting or are prohibited by law because they are a declared noxious or environmental weed.

'Declared weeds' are banned in Victoria because they threaten Victoria's biodiversity and agriculture. All Victorians are prohibited by law from growing or selling these plants.

Other plants have been identified as not suitable for nature strip planting as they can become a weed. These plants are called 'garden escapees'. Their seeds can travel to other areas of open space and along storm water systems into waterways.

A list of common weedy plants that are not to be planted in nature strips in Maribyrnong is included in Appendix B. The DEECA advisory list of environmental weeds in Victoria 2022 contains the full list of weedy plants not to be planted on nature strips.

1.7. Items not permitted

Only plants, soil and mulch are permitted as part of works on nature strips. Items that are not permitted include:

- Irrigation systems
- Raised structures such as garden edging, retaining walls, railway sleepers, fencing posts or star pickets that may pose a tripping hazard (for information relating to planter boxes please refer to section 1.13 of these guidelines).
- Rocks, gravel, synthetic turf and non-permeable surfaces
- Letterboxes, street libraries, furniture and play equipment. These need to be installed within the resident's property boundary.

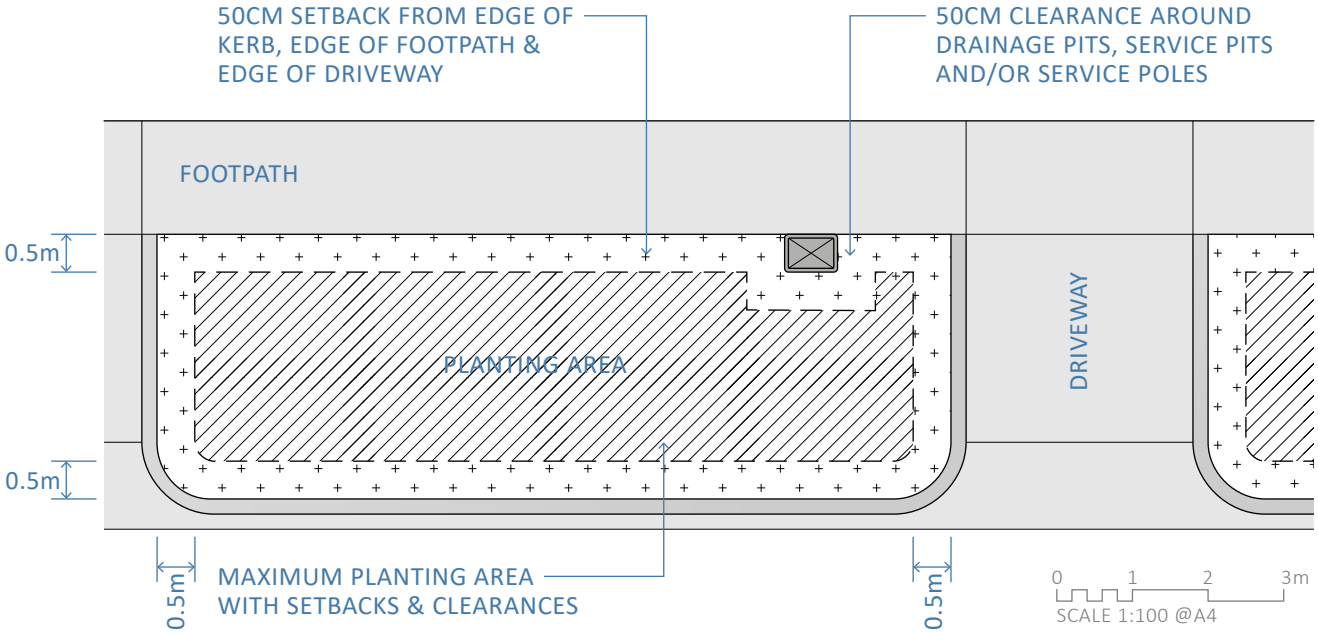
An area no greater than 10% of the total area of the nature strip may be covered by pavers, stepping stones or granitic sand to facilitate access to other parts of the nature strip, and pedestrian movements between the roadway and the footpath. These surfaces must have a non-slip surface and be at a level that is flush with the finished mulch level.

1.8. Planting locations

Nature strip planting works must maintain adequate clearance, accessibility and visibility for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular traffic when using, entering or exiting an intersection, driveway or footpath. For these reasons, planting set-back and height requirements are outlined in these guidelines.

A minimum clearance distance of 50cm must be maintained between shrubs and plants (other than ground covers) from:

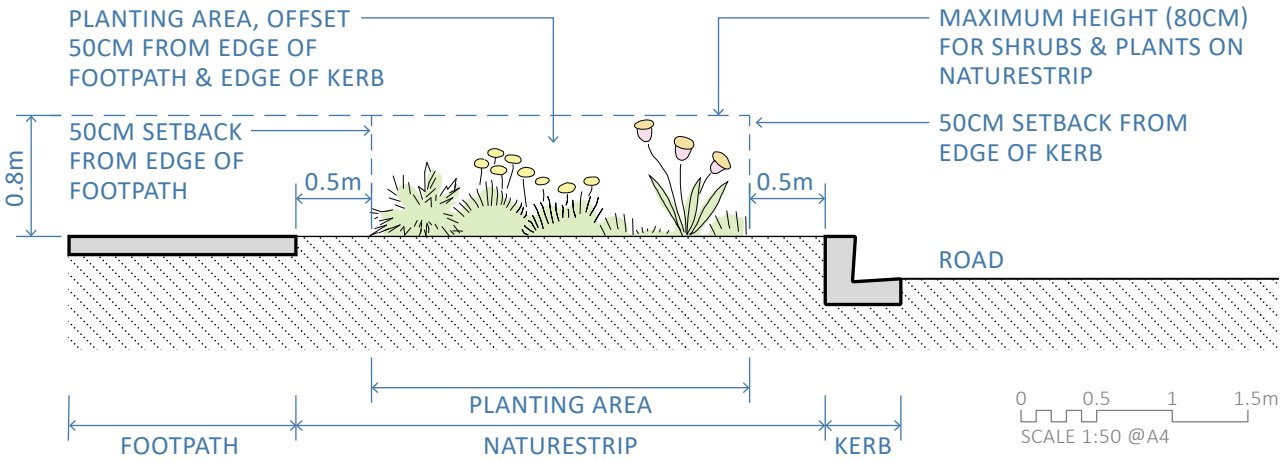
- Back of kerb
- Edge of the footpath
- Edge of a driveway
- Around drainage pits
- Around service pits and poles (power, telecommunications etc)



The ground within these clearance zones can be covered in suitable ground cover plants or permeable mulch.

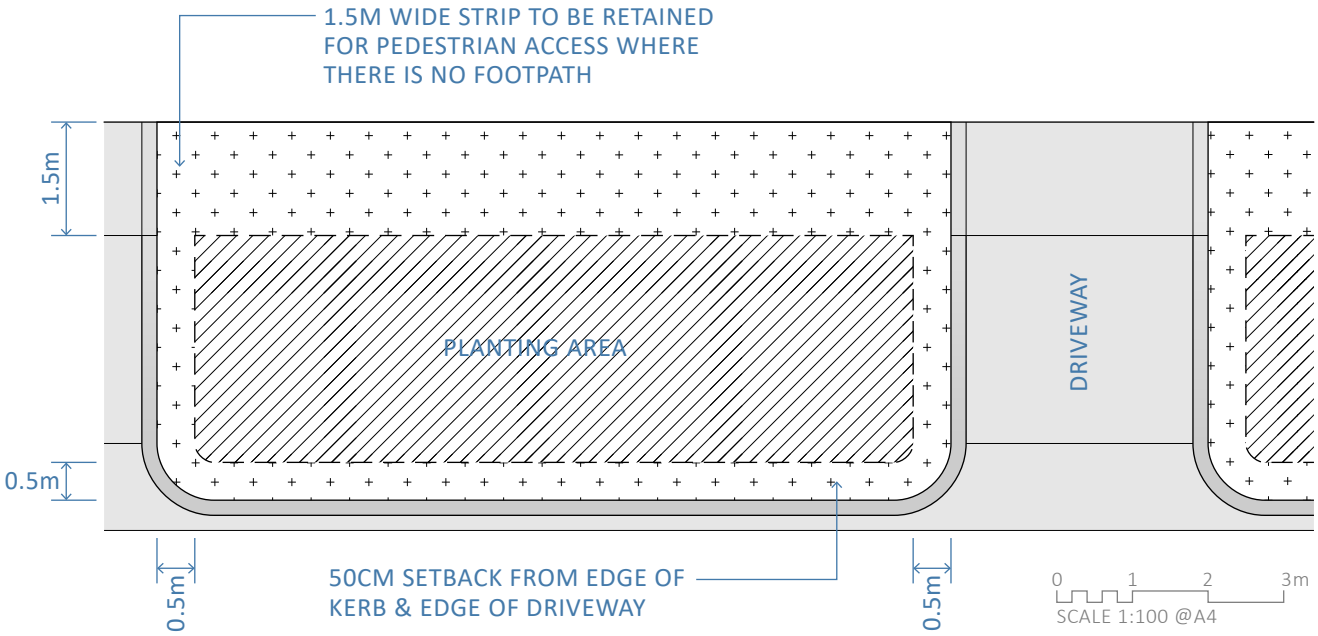
A similar clearance zone must also be maintained on nature strips that are located within 10m of an intersection, street corner or roundabout.

Shrubs which exceed 0.8m in height must be pruned or lopped so that they comply with this height restriction, or replaced with a suitable plant that meets this requirement.



Even with compliant clearances in place due consideration must be given for the need to provide safe and suitable access to the footpath for people exiting a parked car.

Where there isn't a footpath abutting the residential property, a 1.5m wide strip suitable for pedestrian access must be retained in any planted nature strip.



A suitable space must be available on your nature strip to accommodate waste and recycling bins on collection days.

1.9. Lawn alternatives

To maximise the environmental benefit of a nature strip as much of the nature strip should be planted and permeable as possible.

Lawn alternatives like synthetic turf, and hard and impervious surfaces that store heat and prevent water being absorbed into the ground are not permitted.

Permeable surfaces improve the quality of stormwater runoff as they remove and filter nutrients and sediment, and allow water to infiltrate into the ground which replenishes groundwater and supports the health of street trees.

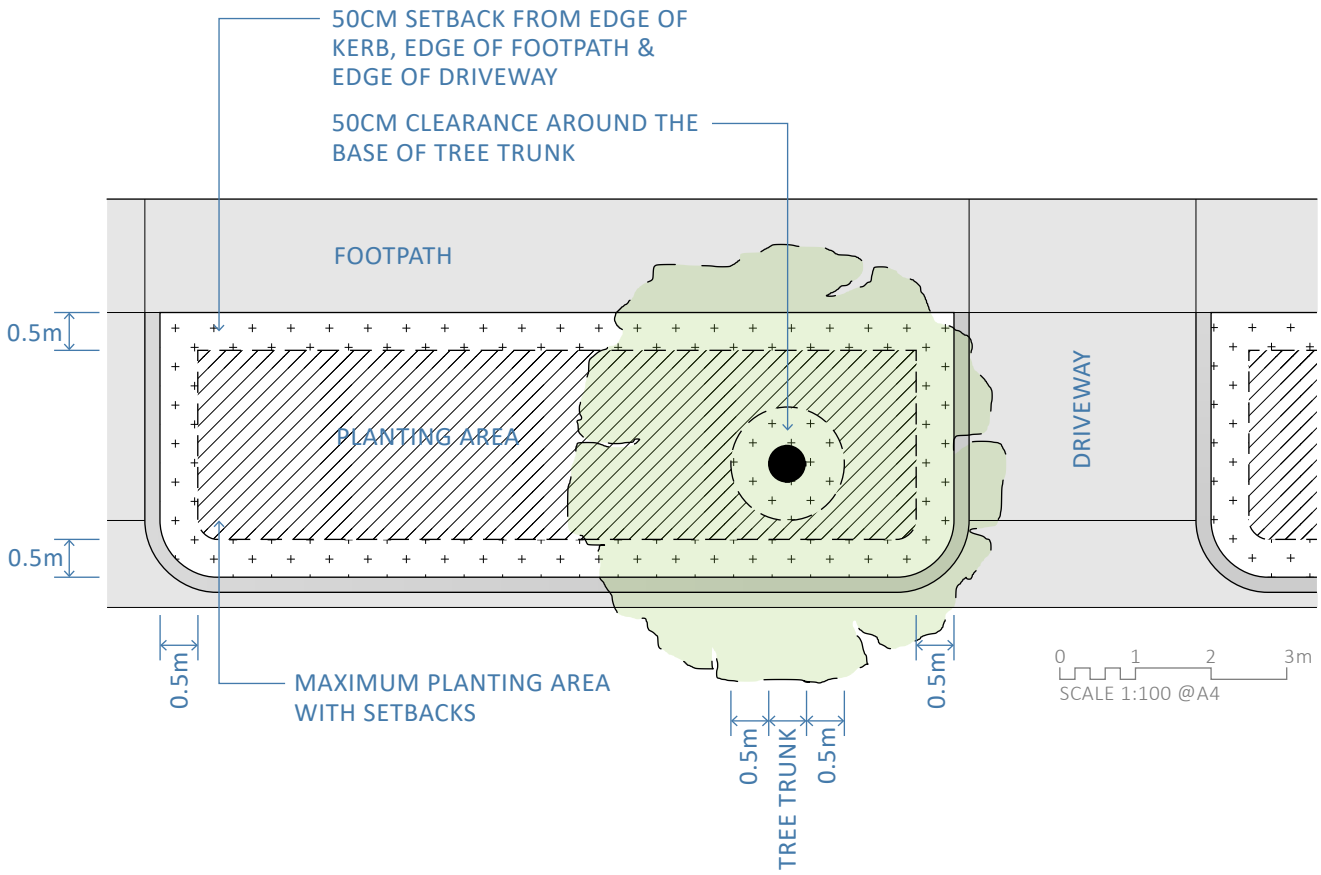
1.10. Street trees

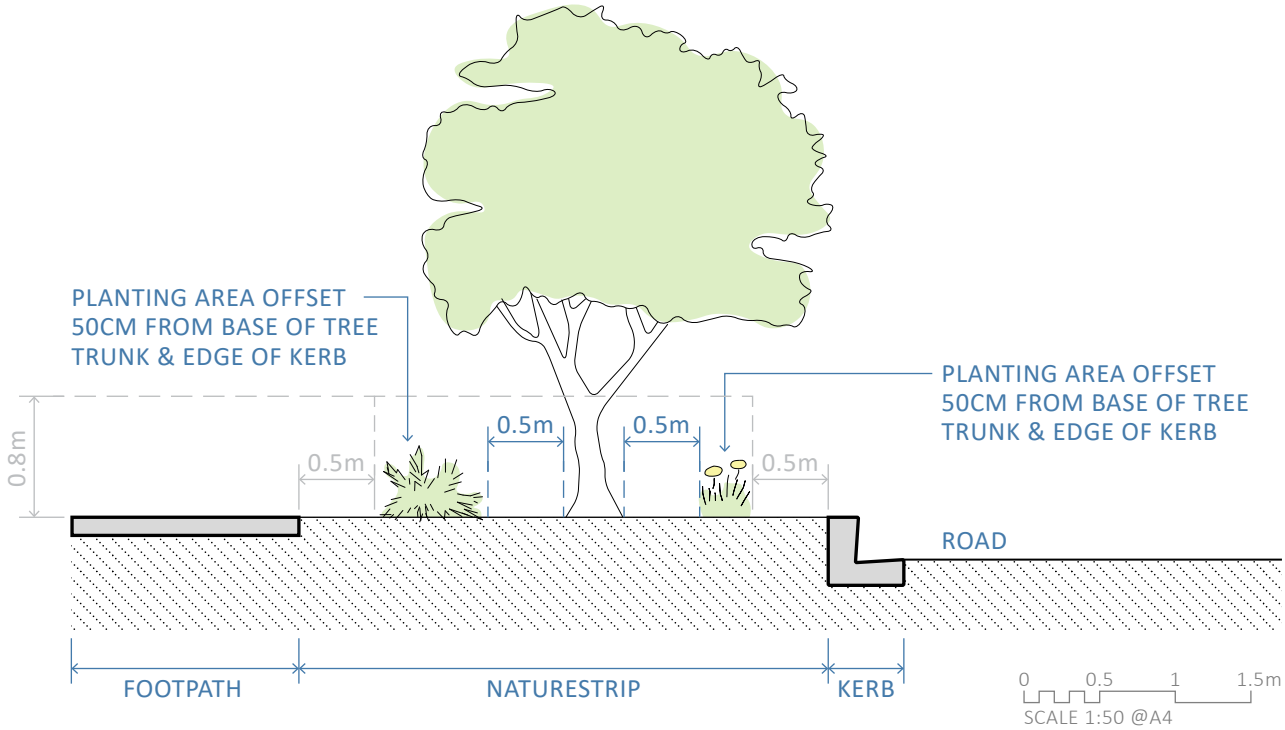
Council is responsible for selecting, planting and maintaining street trees. These trees are carefully chosen to provide shade, shelter and cleaner air as well as habitat for native fauna.

Residents are not permitted to plant, alter or remove a tree in their nature strip however requests for street trees are welcomed and encouraged. Residents can contact Council to ask for a street tree to be planted in the nature strip and Council will arrange for an appropriate tree species to be planted at a suitable time of the year.

Fruit trees are not suitable street tree species. Many species of fruit trees are not drought tolerant, they provide less canopy cover than other tree options and are likely to drop fruit and create a slipping hazard for pedestrians.

Any other planting on the nature strip are not to be within 50cm of the base of the trunk and be planted without excavating soil under the canopy of the tree.





Care should be taken to not damage any roots when digging within the vicinity of street trees. If you uncover tree roots, do not cut, scrape or damage them.

Material such as mulch or grass clippings are not to be mounded around or above the base of the trunk.

For further details on street trees please refer to Councils ***Urban Forest Strategy.***

1.11. Mulch

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

The recommended level of mulch is approximately 75mm which allows rainfall to reach the soil while still reducing evaporation and erosion. Spreading ground cover plants can also be used to avoid the need for mulch once the plants mature.

1.12. Edible plants

Edible plants may be planted provided they fit with the planting locations and heights outlined within these guidelines.

Residents need to be aware that soil contamination is a common problem in urban areas. The nature strip soil should be tested for contaminants such as lead and any other potential health risks understood.

GardenSafe is a soil testing program run by Environment Protection Authority (EPA) that residents can access.

Residents must maintain the fruit and/or vegetables to manage and remove produce dropping on the nature strip, insect infestations or rotting items without using weed killers or pesticides that animals and other passers-by might come into contact with.

Edible plants are accessible to everyone who passes by and may be exposed to other contaminants. Conversely nothing can be enforced to stop the public from helping themselves to anything that is grown on a nature strip.

Council does not accept responsibility for illness or allergic reactions caused by consumption of or contact with plants planted on a nature strip.

1.13. Planter boxes

To reduce the risk posed by soil contamination, residents are encouraged to use raised planter boxes filled with clean soil in which to grow edible plants.

Planter boxes that sit above or on top of the ground for growing edible plants, herbs and vegetables are permitted on nature strips.

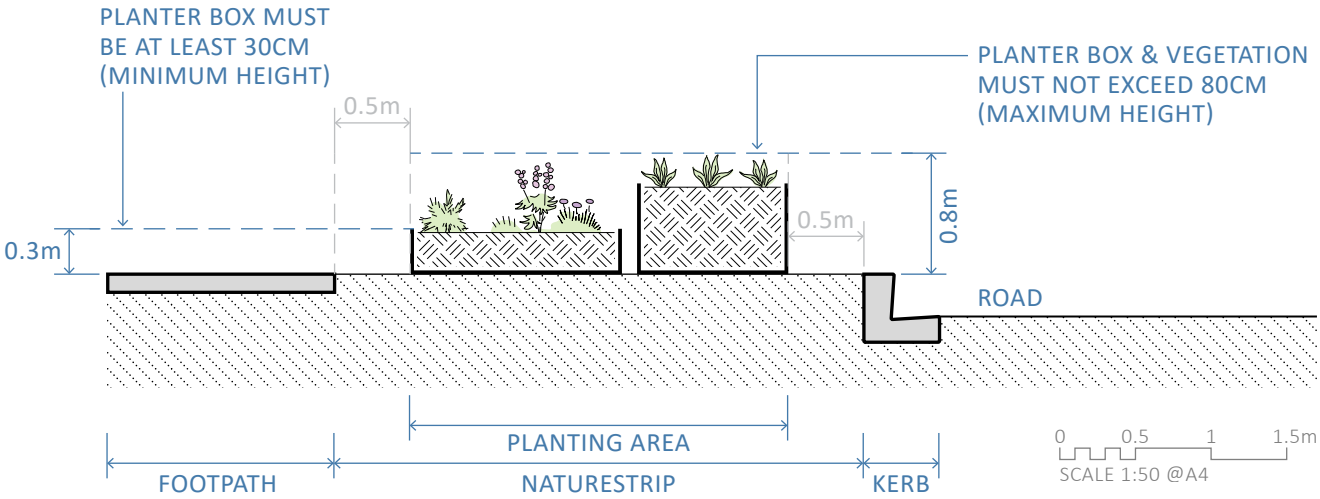
General guidance is provided below to ensure the suitability of the planter box and that minimum clearance distances can be maintained.

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

There are some nature strips that are not in locations that are suitable for accommodating raised planter boxes. Planter boxes cannot be located on a nature strip within:

- 10m of an intersection, street corner or roundabout or
- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) or a Special Building Overlay (SBO) due to the risk of flooding.

Planter Box Construction	
Minimum height	30cm
Maximum height	80cm inclusive of planter box & vegetation
Floor on the box	Required to contain the soil within the box & enable the box to be moved if Council or other service authorities require access to the nature strip and/or the services in it.
Material	Free of splinters, sharp edges & protusions (e.g. nails, bolt heads, etc.)
Colour	In keeping with the local neighbourhood character



2. Construction and Maintenance

2.1. Site preparation

Only excavation and cultivation by hand (small hand tools) is permitted. Residents are not permitted to use mechanical means of excavation or cultivation due to the infrastructure that may be underground or the damage that may occur to street trees.

Damaging services within a nature strip whilst gardening can be dangerous and costly. Before beginning any works on a nature strip contact Before You Dig Australia to confirm the presence of any services located within your nature strip.

The resident is responsible for:

- Repairing any damage to infrastructure caused by any landscaping works.
- Reporting any damage to essential services or emergency services assets to the appropriate authority.

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.

2.2. Services and utilities

As nature strips often contain essential services, utility companies or emergency services may need to access their infrastructure for upgrades or repairs at any time, and therefore require access to be maintained.

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, storm water, sewer and water are often located in the nature strip, so be aware that your plants could be dug up and your planter boxes damaged with little or no warning.

While service authorities and Council will reinstate the nature strip to a neat finish, no plants or planter boxes will be repaired or replaced following any disturbance during access works. Any costs incurred to reinstate the plants and planter boxes will be borne by the resident.

2.3. Maintenance and obligations

It is the responsibility of the resident to maintain their landscaped nature strip. The nature strip must be kept clear and tidy, and safe for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles passing by.

To do this, residents are required to:

- Keep plants pruned to a height of no more than 80cm at all times.
- Prune plants so that they do not protrude onto pathways, driveways or beyond the back of kerb.
- Keep the nature strip free of weeds and rubbish.
- Maintain a mulch cover over any part of the nature strip where there are no other plants.
- Ensure mulch is contained within the nature strip and does not move onto the footpath or driveways, or into the kerb and channel.
- Keep the nature strip free of any tripping hazards and any protruding objects.
- Repair any damage to infrastructure caused by planting works.
- Address works considered unsightly or hazardous. This may require works to be maintained or removed and made safe as directed by Council.

2.4. Public liability

Residents are reminded that they plant the nature strip at their own expense and own risk.

It is recommended that the resident extends their house and contents public liability insurance to include their planted nature strip.

3. Resources

My Smart Garden | mysmartgarden.org.au

Before You Dig Australia | www.byda.com.au

Newport Lakes Native Nursery | www.facebook.com/NewportLakesNativeNursery

Westgate Biodiversity | westgatebiodiversity.org.au

Iramoo Grassland Centre & Nursery at Victoria University

Plants of Melbourne's Western Plains a Gardeners Guide to the Original Flora

Contact information

For further information or assistance please contact Council's Recreation and Open Space Team

Ph: (03) 9688 0200

Email: ros@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Appendix

A. Suggested species suitable for nature strip planting

A.1. Indigenous: ground covers (up to 15 cm height)

Botanical Name	Common Name	Description
Atriplex semibaccata	Berry Saltbush	Prostrate with succulent red fruit.
Calocephalus citreus	Lemon Beauty Heads	Hardy perennial herb with silver grey leaves & lemon flowers in summer.
Convolvulus erubescens	Pink Bindweed	Bright pink flowers.
Dichondra repens	Kidney Weed	Mat forming herb with kidney shaped leaves.
Disphyma crassifolium	Rounded Noon Flower	Succulent ground cover with masses of bright pink flowers.
Einadia nutans	Nodding Saltbush	Trailing perennial with red or orange berries.
Enchylaena tomentose	Ruby Saltbush	Low herb with fleshy leaves & red or yellow succulent berry.
Hardenbergia violacea	False Sarsaparilla	Hardy ground cover/climber with purple pea flowers in late winter-spring.
Kennedia prostrata	Running Postman	Prostrate ground cover with scarlet pea flowers in spring-summer.
Myoporum parvifolium	Creeping Boobialla	Fast growing spotted white flowers in spring.
Scleranthus biflorus	Twin Flowered Knawel	Green 'moss' like cushion, needs moisture.
Viola hederacea	Native Violet	Small white & mauve flowers most of year. Suitable for shady and moist areas.

NOTE: The above list is a guide and other plants that conform to the Nature Strip Planting Guidelines can be planted.

A.2. Indigenous: low growing shrubs (up to 80cm height)

Botanical Name	Common Name	Description
Brachyscome dentate	Golden (lobe seed) Daisy	30 cm white daisy flower.
Brachyscome multifidi	Cut Leaf Daisy	30 cm purple daisy flower
Calocephalus lacteus	Milky Beauty Heads	Sprawling perennial with aromatic leaves and cream flowers in summer
Chrysocephalum apiculatum	Common Everlasting	30 cm golden flowers most of the year.
Chrysocephalum semipapposum	Clustered Everlasting	60 cm golden flowers in spring.
Craspedia variablis	Common Billy-button	50 cm bright yellow flowers.
Dianella revolute	Spreading Flax Lilly	Very hardy perennial lily with deep blue flowers on stems
Dicanthium sericium	Silky Blue Grass	Erect tussock forming grass with blue-grey leaves & numerous silky flower spikes in summer
Dichelachne crinite	Long Hair Plume Grass	Fine leafed tussock grass with attractive cream coloured plumes on long stems
Helichrysum sp aff. Rutidolepis	Pale Everlasting	Yellow button flowers spring to autumn
Lobelia pratioides	Poison Lobelia	Spreading herb blue flowers, prefers damp.
Minuria leptophylla	Minnie Daisy	20 cm with white or mauve daisy flowers
Poa sp.	Tussock grasses	Indigenous species may be suitable
Podolepsis jacoides	Showy Podolepsis	20 cm yellow flowers
Pycnosorus chrysanthes	Golden Billy-button	30 cm golden globular flowers
Pycnosorus globosus	Drumsticks	Silvery foliage with large globular yellow flowers
Themeda triandra	Kangaroo Grass	Purple-green foliage in spring turning pale rusty colour over summer.
Wahlenbergia communis	Tufted Bluebell	Bright blue bell shaped flowers in spring and autumn

NOTE: The above list is a guide and other plants that conform to the Nature Strip Planting Guidelines can be planted.

A.3. Exotic and native: ground covers (up to 15 cm height)

Botanical Name	Common Name	Description
Arctotis sp.	African Daisy	Large daisy like flowers, different foliage.
Dimorphoteca ecloni	Veldt Daisy	Purple daisy like flowers.
Festuca glauca	Blue Fescue	10 cm blue-green grass in tufts.
Grevillea species	Eg. 'Poorinda Royal Mantle'	A dense matt forming ground cover with showy flowers.
Ophiopogon japonicas	Mondo Grass	Dwarf grass, other cultivars may be appropriate.
Stachys byzantine	Lamb's Ear	Silver grey foliage, flower heads need pruning after flowering.

NOTE: The above list is a guide and other plants that conform to the Nature Strip Planting Guidelines can be planted.

A.4. Exotic and native: low growing shrubs (up to 80 cm height)

Botanical Name	Common Name	Description
Anigozanthus 'Little Joey'	Dwarf Kangaroo Paw	Other dwarf cultivars may be appropriate.
Coprosma acerosa		Hardy evergreen shrub to 300mm.
Cotoneaster microphylla		Prostrate shrub with red berries
Dianella sp.	Flax Lilly	Dwarf cultivars may be appropriate
Juniperus horizontalis 'Bar Harbour'		Low shrub dark green shrub
Luecophyta brownii 'Silver nugget'	Cushion Bush	Hybrid dwarf form of the local coastal cushion bush, grey foliage.

NOTE: The above list is a guide and other plants that conform to the Nature Strip Planting Guidelines can be planted.

B. Common weedy plants not to be planted in nature strips

Botanical Name	Common Name
Agapanthus praecox subp. Orientalis	Agapanthus
Sparaxis bulbifera	Bulbil Sparaxis
Anredera cordifolia	Madeira Vine
Spartina spp.	Cord-grasses
Araujia sericifera	Moth Plant
Tradescantia fluminensis	Small Leaf Spiderwort
Asparagus scandens	Asparagus Fern
Tropaeolum majus	Nasturtium
Billardiara fusiformis or B. heterophylla	Bluebell Creeper
Vinca major	Blue Periwinkle
Chlorophytum comosum	Spider Plant
Cenchrus ciliaris	Buffel Grass
Zantedeschia aethiopica	Arum Lily
Coprosma repens	Mirror Bush
Cortaderia selloana	Pampas Grass
Cotoneaster Sp	Cotoneaster
Crocomia x crocosmiiflora	Montbretia
Dieties species	Wild Iris
Dipogon lignosus	Dolichos Pea
Gazania lineris or G. rigens	Gazania
Genista monspessulana	Montpellier Broom
Hedera helix	English Ivy
Ipomoea indica	Morning Glory
Lobularia maritima	Sweet Alyssum
Lophopyrum ponticum	Tall Wheat-grass
Pennisetum setum	Fountain Grass
Pennisetum villosum	Feathertop Grass
Polygala myrifolia	Myrtle Leaf Milkwort
Rubus fruticosus spp. agg	Blackberry

For the full list of weedy plants not be planted on nature strips, please refer to the DEECA Advisory list of environmental weeds in Victoria 2022.

Maribyrnong City Council offices

Mail address	PO Box 58, Footscray Vic 3012
Phone	03 9688 0200
Fax	03 9687 7793
Email	email@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au
Website	maribyrnong.vic.gov.au

Connect with us

	maribyrnongcc
	Maribyrnong
	@cityofmaribyrnong

TIS 131 450

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