



Nature Strip and Street Gardening Guidelines

Draft 03, July 2022





Guideline Governance

Responsible Service / Department:

Public Space and Planning

Adoption authorised:

Council

Date of adoption:

TBC

Date effective from:

TBC

Content Manager folder:

TBC

Content Manager file:

TBC

Endorsed department manager to make and approve document editorial amendments:

Manager Open Space Recreation and Community Resilience

Annual desktop review date:

2024

Review date:2024

Completion date:

2024

Version number:

01

Stakeholder review and engagement:

Community Consultation

Sustainability, Local Laws, Parks, City Permits, Accessibility/Inclusion, Traffic Management, & Public Space Teams

Relevant Legislation:

Road Safety Act 1986 (Victoria)

Road Management Act 2004 (Victoria)

Local Law No 1 (Community Amenity) 2013 (City Of Port Phillip)

AS1428.1 2009 Australian Standards for Access and Mobility



AS4970 2009 Australian Standards for Tree Protection on Development Sites
 AusRoads Guide to Traffic Management Part 10 <https://austroads.com.au/publications/traffic-management/agtm10>
 Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria <https://www.urban-design-guidelines.planning.vic.gov.au/home>

Associated Strategic Direction #:
 Liveable Port Phillip, Sustainable Port Phillip

Associated instruments:
 Places for People: Public Space Strategy 2022 – 2032
 Greening Port Phillip: An Urban Forest Approach 2010
 Supersedes: Nature Strip Guidelines 2013

Review history:

Name	Content Manager File Reference	Date	Description of Edits
Nature Strip Guidelines	#	TBC	Adoption

Definitions:

Name	Content Manager File Reference
Council	Refers to City of Port Phillip
Public Space or Open Space	Refers to land administered under the 'National Parks Act 1975, Forest Act 1958, Crown land (Reserves) Act 1978 and Land Act 1958
Guideline	Refers to the <i>Nature Strip Guidelines 2022</i>
Legacy Gardens	Refers to gardens which are planted on nature strips (including tree plots) which have been planted prior to the adoption of this Guideline.



Name	Content Manager File Reference
Permit	An official document issued by Council under Local Law that authorises a use or activity
Paved surface	Includes all non-permeable surfaces, including paving, concrete or asphalt
Geotextile base layer	A tough fabric designed to retain soil, available from hardware stores

Purpose

To provide a framework through which the City of Port Phillip can manage the provision of a range of nature strip gardens across the municipality.

This Guideline sets out how to plan, plant and maintain the nature strip or street garden outside your home or business.

You do not need approval or a permit to plant on the nature strip in front of your residential address if you garden in accordance with these Guidelines.

Council officers can be contacted for advice on planting on your nature strip or if you wish to deviate from the requirements set out below.

Scope

This policy applies to all planting in and on nature strips (including tree plots) located in public space managed by Council.

This policy does not apply to laneways, carpark, roads, parks, reserves, median strips, shopping strips or private property. These items are/will be covered in separate plans and guidelines.

What is a nature strip?

A nature strip is the area of public space between the boundary of private property and the road kerb but does not include the paved footpath area.

Nature strips include essential above and below-ground public services including water, sewerage, gas, electricity and communications infrastructure. They also provide space for rubbish collection.



Figure 1 Examples of nature strips

What is a tree plot?

Some streets in Port Phillip are fully paved and do not have nature strips. Many of these streets will have gravel areas around trees which are there to support their growth, these areas are called tree plots.



Figure 2 Examples of tree plots and street gardens (planted tree plots)

Value of Nature Strip Planting

Nature strips are important green spaces that support street trees, provide permeable surfaces and can improve biodiversity if planted with a variety of plants, including local indigenous species.

When planted with a garden, nature strips can:

- improve biodiversity
- improve permeability
- reduce the urban heat island effect
- contribute to streetscape attractiveness
- provide opportunities to meet community



- provide activity through gardening
- reduce the need for mowing.

Legacy Gardens

Many valued, biodiverse and beautiful nature strip gardens are planted in Port Phillip. There is no expectation that these gardens be removed, even if they do not fully comply with the new guidelines.

Council is sometimes requested to investigate nature strip gardens where a safety concern has been raised. In these instances, Council works with affected residents to modify and maintain the gardens and ensure public safety. In rare situations where there is a continued conflict between the garden and safety, Council has the option to utilise the Local Law to issue orders and penalties.

Planning

Before starting your nature strip garden:

- Read these guidelines to understand the requirements of planting in public space
- Talk to your neighbours. Let them know what you are planning, ask if they would like to join in and talk through any concerns.
- Consider planting indigenous plants to promote biodiversity and improve habitat for rare and threatened species.
- Consider planting drought tolerant species and group plants with similar water needs together to reduce water use.
- For the best outcomes, nature strips will need to be prepared before they are ready for planting – this might involve improving the soil or removing grass.
- Moving soil or removing old plants could impact tree roots so consider how this will be done during the planning stage.
- There may be additional requirements for nature strip gardens if you live in an area with a Heritage Overlay or in an area on the Victorian Heritage Register <link>. Please contact City of Port Phillip for extra information if this applies to you.
- Remember to always consider safety, particularly when planting near roads.

More information about suitable plant species is available [on our webpage](#) or in the [gardening section at local libraries](#).

Guidelines

Access and Safety

Nature strips are part of Council's public space network and are required to be maintained so that they are safe and accessible for everyone. When planning and planting your garden the following requirements must be met.



Footpaths

Footpaths need to be kept free of vegetation so everyone can use them. Vegetation that grows over the path can impact accessibility for prams, wheelchairs, scooters and people who are requiring assistance. Generally, a 1.2m wide footpath is the minimum width to enable safe and accessible passage.

Guideline Requirement:

- A 30 cm offset is required beside the footpath.
- You can grow grass, a low ground cover or have mulch in the offset area
- All plants are trimmed back from the path edge.

Kerbs and parking

Plants growing over kerbs can impact on storm water flow and access from parked cars.

Guideline Requirement (parallel parking)

- Keep a 50 cm offset beside the kerb clear
- Keep an area 1m wide clear every 5m to allow people to access the footpath from the kerb
- You can grow grass, a low ground cover or have mulch in the offset area
- All plants are trimmed back from the kerb edge
- Keep a suitable area for rubbish bin collection.

Guideline Requirement (angled parking)

- You can plant to the curb
- Keep plants below 50cm in height within a 50cm offset from the kerb
- Keep an area 1.2 m wide clear every 5.5 m (or every two car spaces) to allow people to access the footpath from the kerb.
- You can grow grass, a low ground cover or have mulch in the offset area
- All plants are trimmed back from the kerb edge
- Keep a suitable area for rubbish bin collection.

Plant heights

High plants can also block sight lines for vehicles, which can cause safety concerns for both pedestrians and cyclists (particularly young children).

Guideline requirement

- Plants grown on nature strips and in street gardens need to be kept under 1m high to ensure visibility for everyone walking, cycling and driving.
- Plants should be under 50 cm high in the following circumstances:
 - When they are within 2m from a driveway.
 - When they are within 10m from a corner, pedestrian crossing or intersection.



City of Port Phillip Nature Strip Guidelines

Offset area diagrams

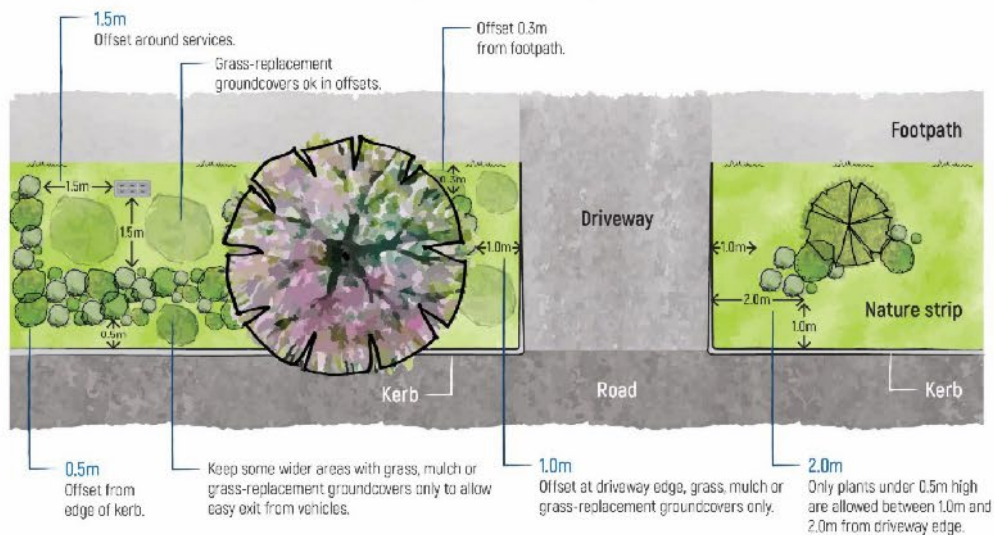


Figure 3 Offsets from driveways, kerbs, footpaths and service pits. Clearances from kerb on streets with parallel parking. For nature strip gardens only

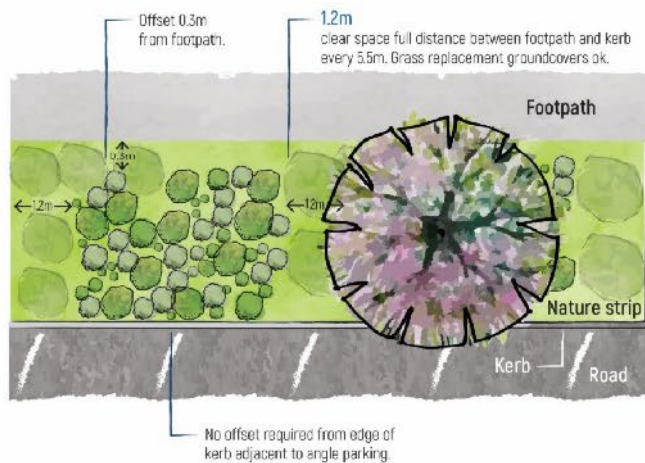


Figure 4 Offsets from kerb and path and clear space for footpath access on streets with parallel parking. For nature strip gardens only



Trees

Street trees provide shade and shelter for people walking and cycling and cool streets and surrounding properties in hot weather. Trees contribute to the aesthetics and character of the street and accommodate urban wildlife.

As trees in urban areas are growing in harsher conditions, it is important to protect their growing space. Street trees require an area to be kept free of planting to protect their root zone. This provides trees access to available water and nutrients, allowing roots to breathe and helping protect tree roots from disease.

Newly planted trees need time for roots to establish. Because the soil area in tree plots is limited, allowing the roots of new trees to establish without competing with other plants for water or nutrients gives the tree the best chance to develop into a strong, healthy tree.

Guideline Requirements (planting around trees):

- Keep a radius of 1.5 m or 3 times the trunk diameter (whichever is greater) free of planting surrounding the tree trunk
- Do not plant around the tree for 2 years. Trees within Port Phillip have a two-year establishment period and during this time it will have garden stakes supporting it's growth
- Keep the soil level the same level below the tree canopy
- Do not mound soil, mulch or grass clippings against the tree trunk
- Use only hand tools in this area and take care around tree roots. Do not use mechanical tools.
- If an area is hard to dig, don't force it. A small tree root may be lying under that section of turf.
- If you uncover tree roots, do not cut, scrape or damage them. Any roots that are uncovered during the process can be buried with mulch or new topsoil to keep them healthy
- No planting permitted in tree plots.



Planting around trees diagrams

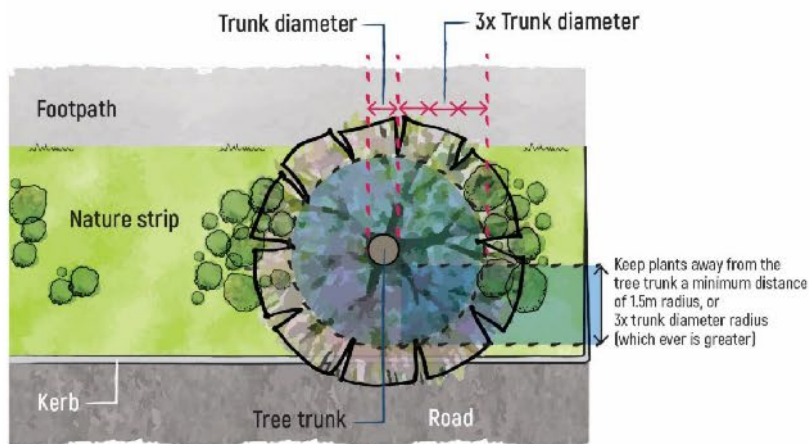


Figure 5 Keep a radius of 1.5 m or 3 times the trunk diameter (whichever is greater) free of planting surrounding the tree trunk when planting in nature strips

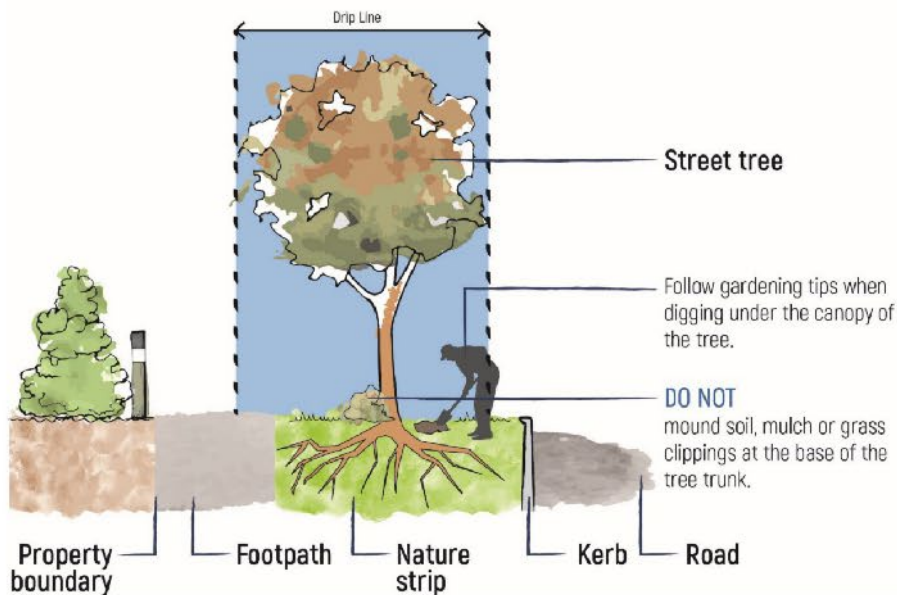


Figure 6 Extra care is required in the drip line (under the tree canopy) of trees. Do not mound soil, mulch or grass clippings against trees in nature strips or street gardens.



Natural Gardening

Nature strip gardening can improve the health of the local environment, increased planting can attract insects and fauna to the area and create cool areas in an otherwise hot urban setting. Improving environmental outcomes should be considered when creating your garden.

Guideline Requirements

- Do not use any materials or plants which could have negative environmental outcomes. Including but not limited to weed species, poisonous plants, herbicides, synthetic turf or paving.

Recommended plants and common weed species can be found on [Council's website](#)

Rocks and other Infrastructure

Infrastructure included within nature strip gardens could become unsafe and cause accidents. Consider if items could:

- become slippery or loose
- block sightlines
- cause injury if fallen on, as they are sharp or pointed
- become a trip hazard
- be misused or create a risk

Guideline Requirements

- Do not include anything other than plants in your garden
- Materials or structures are not permitted including (but not limited to) raised edging, irrigation, garden stakes, fencing, walls, furniture, play equipment, art, signs, rocks, letter boxes, community libraries or prickly plants

Contact council if you are unsure if an item can be included in your design.

Planter boxes

Planter boxes are an option to improve greening on paved nature strips. The size and placement of the planter boxes needs to be considered to maintain access for pedestrians, car doors and bin collection.

Guideline Requirements

- Planter boxes must maintain:
 - 1m clearance from the edge of the kerb
 - 1.5m clear footpath area
 - 1m away from tree trunks, street furniture or structures.
- Planter boxes must be between 0.3m - 0.9m in height and no longer than 1.8m



- Planter boxes must include a sealed base on paved surface and a geotextile base layer on grass/dirt.

Essential services

Nature Strips often contain essential services such as power and water. Damaging these services while gardening can be dangerous and costly, consider this in your planning.

Utility companies may access their infrastructure for upgrades or repairs at any time, and therefore require access to be maintained. Utility companies are required to reinstate grass on the nature strip following maintenance work but are not required to reinstate nature strips that have been modified and landscaped with anything other than grass.

Guideline Requirements

- Contact *Dial Before You Dig* before planting or digging - 1100 or www.1100.com.au.
- Report any damage to essential services to the appropriate authority
- Provide a 1.5m off-set from service pits, storm water pits, power poles, fire hydrants and service pillars
- You can grow grass, a low ground cover or have mulch in the offset area

If you are unsure, [please contact Council for assistance](#).

Soil contamination

Soil contamination is common across Port Phillip (and all of inner-Melbourne). Humans may be exposed to these contaminants when gardening, via direct skin contact or by inhaling airborne dust when digging. These contaminants can also transfer to edible plants.

Guideline Recommendation:

- Due to potential health risks, Council recommends that you do not eat plants grown directly in your nature strip or street garden. You should grow plants you intend to eat in a raised planter box with clean soil purchased from a nursery.

Find out more [about planter boxes or soil contamination](#)

Contact

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