

Nature Strip Planting Handbook



City of
STONNINGTON



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Nature strips are an important part of Stonnington's neighbourhood character.

This handbook provides instructions to residents who want to add to their nature strips while ensuring they comply with Council's **Nature Strip Planting Policy**.

Why would I plant out my nature strip?

In urban areas where open space is often limited, planting on nature strips provides an opportunity for residents to engage with an alternative type of public green space.

There are many reasons why residents might choose to plant on their nature strip, including:

- adding value to their neighbourhood by adding colour or interest to their street
- contributing to a sense of ownership and pride in the local area
- replacing grass that is performing poorly or avoiding the maintenance of regular weeding or mowing
- minimising the need for watering by planting native or drought tolerant plants
- supporting local ecosystems by strengthening habitat connectivity and attracting beneficial insects, pollinators, birds and other local fauna
- improving climate resilience of the local neighbourhood, through cooling the surrounding area, absorbing rain and reducing stormwater runoff.

What is a nature strip?

A nature strip is the area of land between the boundary of a private property and the kerb, excluding the paved footpath area. Nature strips are Council land, but it is typically the responsibility of residents to maintain them.

Nature strips are usually grassed, but depending where you live, they may also contain gravel, granitic, sand, synthetic turf or something else.

Nature strips that you CAN plant on include any on streets that:

- ✓ are already planted with grass, groundcover or any other plants
- ✓ have been laid with synthetic turf
- ✓ contain gravel, granitic sand or mulch that can be carefully removed by hand-held tools.

Unfortunately, not every nature strip is going to be suitable for planting.

Locations that you CAN'T plant on include:

- ✗ concreted nature strips or footpaths containing street tree pits
- ✗ nature strips located on streets that fall within the scope of Council's **Narrow Streets Policy**
- ✗ land maintained by Council contractors, or other government agencies.

Some nature strips are in unsafe locations or contain too many underground services and assets, meaning they are too high a risk for planting. If you want to check if your nature strip is eligible before submitting an application, please contact us on **8290 1333** or via email **environment@stonnington.vic.gov.au**.

What if I already have a nature strip garden?

There are many beautiful, biodiverse nature strip gardens already planted within the City of Stonnington.

There is no expectation that existing gardens be removed as part of the introduction of Council's **Nature Strip Planting Policy**, however all nature strip gardens need to be safe and maintain accessibility for road and footpath users.

If you already have an established nature strip garden applying for a permit is not required if you:

- ensure footpaths and walkways are kept clear, maintaining gardens back from the kerb so as not to affect traffic or parked cars
- maintain a maximum height that ensures sightlines are not disrupted
- remove any raised structures or other modifications that may be a tripping hazard.

When an existing nature strip garden poses a safety concern, we will work with the resident to both maintain the garden and reduce the risk involved.

In rare situations when there is a continued conflict between the garden and safety, Council has the option under its *General Local Law 2018* (amendment) to issue orders and penalties.

Planning and design

Underground assets

Nature strips often contain essential underground services including:

- > gas
- > electricity
- > potable water pipes and stormwater drains
- > telecommunications
- > sewerage lines.



Impacting any of these underground assets can lead to disruption of essential services, injury or even death. You could also be responsible for the cost of repairing any damaged services, so it is crucial that you undertake careful planning before making any changes to your nature strip.

Prior to any digging, consult **Before You Dig Australia**, a free pre-excavation service that will provide you with plans showing the location of any underground assets in the area.

You must then contact all relevant authorities listed on the **Before You Dig Australia** assessment to ensure planned works do not interfere with these underground assets. As part of your permit application, you will be required to submit evidence that you have contacted **Before You Dig Australia** and taken relevant information into account.

Some private connections may not be listed in the **Before You Dig Australia** assessment, so any digging must be undertaken using solely hand-held tools. The use of machinery (e.g. auger drills) on nature strips is not permitted.

DO:

- ✓ contact **Before You Dig Australia**
- ✓ use hand-held tools
- ✓ go slowly and carefully.

DON'T:

- ✗ proceed without research
- ✗ use machinery
- ✗ move too fast.

Council and third-party works

From time to time, Council and other authorities will need to perform services, maintenance and repair works in or around nature strips.

This could include:

- gas, water, electricity, and telecommunications authorities accessing underground assets
- waste collection and management services
- street cleaning services
- street tree management, maintenance, removal, and/or new plantings
- traffic and parking management.

These activities are important – they reduce potential health and safety risks, ensure critical services can be provided and help maintain our urban amenity.

Inadvertent damage to nearby nature strips may be caused during the course of these works.

In the event this takes place, Council Officers, contractors, and third parties are only required to reinstate the nature strip with grass.

To help minimise the likelihood of this happening you can:

- ensure there is sufficient room for your bins to go out during waste collection
- regularly maintain your nature strip by weeding, pruning and picking up fallen leaves or other debris
- check our schedule of **tree pruning works** and plan your nature strip gardening for once they have been completed.

The most important thing you can do is to make sure your nature strip garden is within with the height and distance limits on the next page.

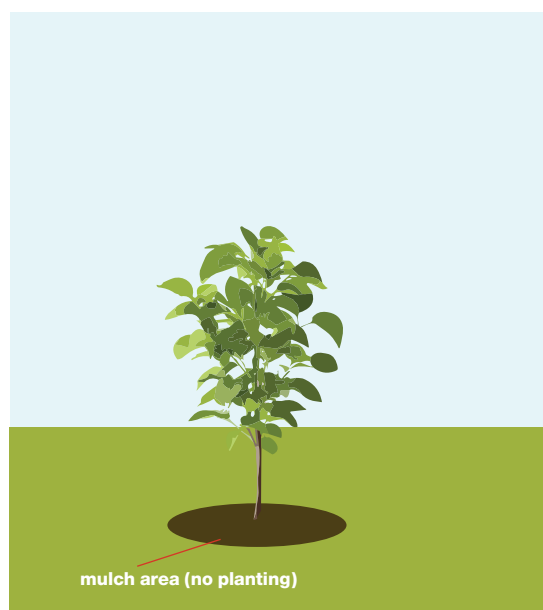
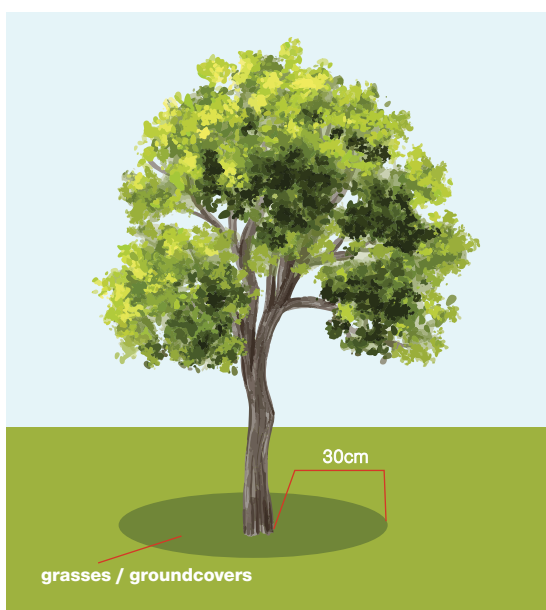


Street trees

In many cases, the nature strips that are best suited for planting will also contain street trees, which are planted and maintained by Council. To keep these trees happy and healthy, planting must not interfere with tree root systems under surface of the nature strip.

Relevant conditions of the **Nature Strip Planting Permit** include:

- Only grasses or groundcovers are to be planted in a 30cm radius of the trunk of the tree.
- No planting is to be undertaken in the mulched area around newly planted trees.



Become a part of the urban forest!

If your nature strip does not have a street tree, request one by contacting Council.

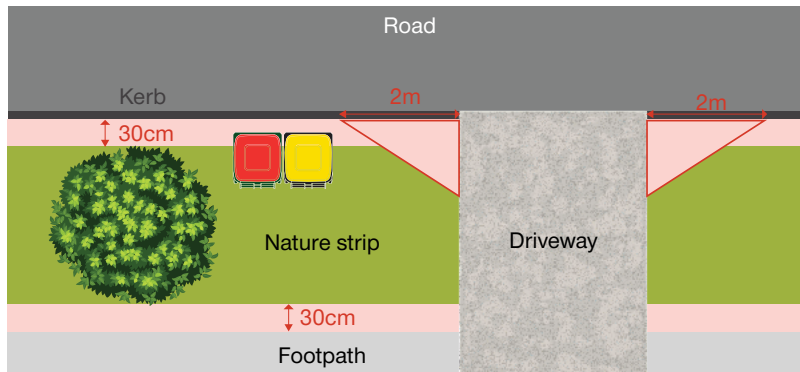


Heights and distances

When planting on a nature strip, it is important to also support public access for both pedestrians and road users. Tripping hazards over footpaths need to be minimised as much as possible, clear and visible sight lines for road users must be maintained. Residents and visitors should be able to park and open car doors without risk of damage from encroaching plants.

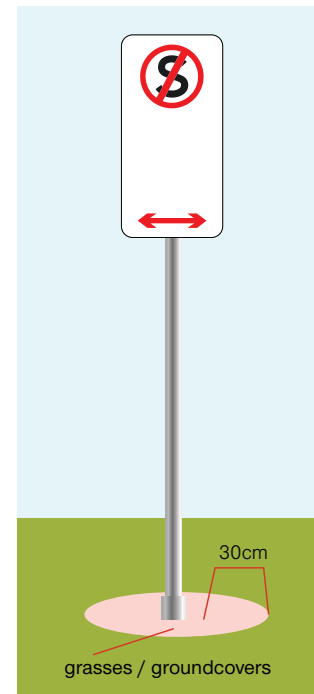
To make sure everyone can use our streets safely, the **Nature Strip Planting Permit** requires that:

- only low-growing grasses and groundcovers are to be planted within 30cm of the footpath, kerb, parking signage and power poles
- only low-growing grasses and groundcovers are to be used within 10m of an intersection, street corner, roundabout or similar
- in all other areas, plants are to be maintained at maximum height of no more than 90cm.



KEY

- sight distance splay
- low-growing grasses/groundcovers only (max. height 50cm)
- potential planting location



Retaining walls, loose materials and other man-made objects

Nature strips are a point of access for many pedestrians as they move from the road onto the footpath and vice versa. At night and during the darker winter months, unexpected raised structures may cause a serious tripping hazard, while loose materials can easily move from the nature strip to the footpath or into gutters and stormwater systems during heavy rains.

For this reason, raised structures and loose materials are not permitted on nature strips, including:

- × private lighting, irrigation, water tanks
- × retaining walls
- × planter boxes
- × hard landscaping surfaces (e.g. pavers, bricks, fences, etc.)
- × fine gravel, granitic sand, etc
- × synthetic turf.

Maintenance


It is your responsibility as a resident to maintain your nature strip to ensure that it stays safe and maintains accessibility, all year round. By applying for a **Nature Strip Planting Permit**, you agreeing to ensure you prune back plants during periods of growth, weed regularly and keep the area free of litter and debris.







What plants can I use?

Groundcovers, grasses, wildflowers and low growing shrubs can provide a beautiful and biodiverse alternative to traditional mown grasses. Before getting started, it is worthwhile planning your nature strip garden.

Consider planting your nature strip garden with:

 <p>indigenous and Australian natives to support local biodiversity</p>	 <p>flowering native and exotic plant species to attract bees, butterflies, and other local pollinators</p>
 <p>native and exotic drought tolerant plants to minimise water consumption during the summer</p>	 <p>tufted and low-growing grasses and groundcovers for a low-maintenance nature strip garden</p>

To comply with your nature strip planting permit, do not plant your nature strip garden with:

 Sharp, thorny or prickly plants	They can be dangerous to the community
 Poisonous, noxious, or toxic plants	They can be a risk to community health
 Invasive species or weeds	As defined in the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> or as defined by Agriculture Victoria
 Fruits, vegetables, herbs, or other edible plants intended for human consumption	Nature strip soils in metropolitan Melbourne are often contaminated with heavy metals and other pollutants.

Visit the **City of Stonnington website** for more information on recommended plant species.

Getting community support

Before getting started with your nature strip garden, talk to your neighbours and explain what you are planning to do.

- If you are renting, you can only apply for a **Nature Strip Planting Permit** for the length of your tenancy. As part of your application, you must also provide evidence of support from your landlord (the property owner).
- If you live in an apartment with an eligible shared nature strip, you must provide evidence of support from the owners corporation.
- If you wish to modify an eligible nature strip outside a commercial property, you must provide evidence of support from the property owner.
- In each case, the evidence submitted must confirm that the landlord, owners corporation, or commercial property owner agrees to maintain the nature strip or reinstate it to its pre-modified condition if and when you leave the property or otherwise are unable to continue maintaining it.

Once you've filled out the form and a **Nature Strip Planting Permit** has been issued, Council will send you a notice to display outside your property. This notice will need to be on display for a minimum period of two weeks before you commence gardening activities. Council will consider any objections made within this period on a case-by-case basis.



Applying for a permit

All residents wishing to plant on their nature strip must be granted a **Nature Strip Planting Permit** before commencing work.

The **Nature Strip Planting Permit** is an agreement to adhere to the terms of Council's **Nature Strip Planting Policy**, which seeks to help preserve the core functions and public safety of your nature strip.

Council has made this as easy as possible by creating an online self-assessment tool to allow you to submit your application.

To begin your application process, please visit stonnington.vic.gov.au/naturestripplanting

Next Steps

- Once you have completed your application, Council will send you a notice to display outside your property. This notice must be on display for a minimum period of two weeks.
- During this period, Council Officers will consider any objections made on a case-by-case basis and may contact you to discuss your applications. Should there be substantial objections, your application may be refused.
- Council will be in touch regarding the outcome of your application within four weeks.
- Get planting!

“What if I sell my property?”

If you decide to sell your property, you must inform Council. Council will then contact the new owners to issue a new a Permit, if applicable.

See the **Nature Strip Planting Policy** for more details.



Nature Strip Planting Permits will be valid for a maximum of **two years**, after which they will be reviewed, and if appropriate, re-issued by Council.



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Community languages

Call the Stonnington Community Link, a multilingual telephone information service.

Mandarin	普通話	9280 0730	Polish	Polski	9280 0734
Cantonese	廣東話	9280 0731	Russian	Русский	9280 0735
Greek	Ελληνικά	9280 0732	Indonesian	Bahasa Indonesia	9280 0737
Italian	Italiano	9280 0733	Vietnamese	Tiếng Việt	9280 0748
All other languages		9280 0736			

Service Centres

Stonnington City Centre
311 Glenferrie Road, Malvern
**Stonnington Council Customer Service
and Visitor Hub**
Prahran Square, Chatham Street, Prahran

Open
Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm
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